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**PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION  
AND THE WAR**



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# PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION AND THE WAR

AN ANSWER TO THE ATTACK  
UPON ETON EDUCATION

BY

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## PREFACE

LAST night I saw Sir James Barrie's play, *The Old Woman shows her Medals*. Sir James in this play makes one of the charwomen say, "We ought to teach more science in our public schools."

Those who know anything of play-writing know that master-craftsmen, such as Barrie, take good care not to put esoteric statements in the mouths of their characters, because the appeal across the footlights must be universal. In fact the chief problem of theatrical dialogue is, that the subject dealt with must be already in the minds not only of the duke and the professor, but of the housemaid, the greengrocer, and the man about town, and must appeal to and interest them all. The fact therefore, that Barrie allows his charwomen to discuss such a question as the place of science in our Public Schools throws a sidelight upon the extent to which such questions are before

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the public at the present moment. That, therefore, is my excuse for emerging once again from what is so often called in the newspapers "the forgotten corner."

THOMAS PELLATT

GARRICK CLUB

*April 18, 1917*

## PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION AND THE WAR

### THE ATTACK UPON SCHOOLMASTERS

As the attack which I propose to deal with has escaped the notice of so many, let me state as briefly as I can how it seems to have arisen. A number of persons have apparently constituted themselves into a sort of "Public Schools 'Reform' Club." The leaders of the movement seem most of them to have been educated at Eton College, and no less a person than Lord Desborough himself is apparently the organizer of the crusade.

Their first step appears to have been to send round a circular to the parents of the boys at present at Eton, asking them to join in a sort of freebooting excursion against the type of education now in use there. The attack, however, is not confined to Eton, but is directed against the general system of education in use at Public Schools.

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I have the report of this self-constituted body of reformers in front of me. The second step in their crusade appears to have been to send a deputation to the head masters of the leading Public Schools. The account of the reception of this deputation is given in "the report," and is preceded by extracts from letters written chiefly by parents of boys at Eton.

There is a formidable slip attached to the outside of the report, upon which in ominous capital letters, of red type, are written the words: "*Parents of Public School boys are earnestly requested to read this report.*"

It is, however, far more necessary that all Public School masters should read it, because at this critical moment in the nation's affairs, when it behoves all those engaged in higher education to stand firm and do what they know to be right—at such a moment as this, it is of vital importance that Public School masters should realize the source from which such attacks as this one spring, and the grounds upon which they are based.

The letters from parents at the opening of the report are of great importance. The extreme bitterness of feeling displayed by the writers of these letters against the men who are teaching, or who have taught, them or their boys, should

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first of all be carefully noted. I shall only trouble you with a few quotations. "Since the stock-in-trade of schoolmasters is knowledge of classics, they will fight against any change," says one gentleman, thus attributing to us schoolmasters, as a body, the lowest and most despicable motives of self-interest and worldly greed. Another speaks of the "Antideluvian syllabus of instruction at Public Schools"; another says, "schoolmasters are the greatest obstacles to overcome"; another, "reform can only come by pressure from outside"; another, "schoolmasters are utterly ignorant of their business of imparting knowledge"; another, "schoolmasters are unpractical and blind to real needs," and so on, and so on.

All these insults are coupled with a conviction on the part of the writers that they, and everybody else in their senses, know exactly what ought to be done. The gist of these letters, taken as a whole, is that the classics should be scrapped and the time thus saved should be devoted to those subjects which are *useful* to boys in after life.

The expressions "subjects of practical use"; "useful subjects"; occur over and over again throughout the letters.



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### **THE "USEFUL" SUBJECT**

Though the writers of these letters have never taken the trouble to analyse their own thoughts, it is of vital importance that both schoolmasters and parents should analyse them, and so get to the bottom of what this demand actually means.

My method, therefore, in dealing with the report will be, first of all to state as clearly and briefly as I can what the demand made upon the Public Schools by this deputation actually is, and then by giving extracts from the letters and speeches in the report, to prove beyond any possibility of question that the demand made is exactly what I state it to be.

### **THE DEMAND THEN IS SIMPLY THIS**

According to the report, it is the business of schoolmasters to equip each separate boy who is put under their charge with (1) either the particular species of information which the boy will require in that special one of the thousand—nay, the million—pigeon-holes in which he may happen to find himself in after life, or if that is not possible (2) at any rate to provide the boy with a course of instruction which bear

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directly upon this particular species of information.

• There is no getting away from the fact that this is what all these good folk are really asking for, though they have not given sufficient thought to the subject to realize the nature of their demands themselves, but the note is struck with dignified precision in the opening letter of the report.

"Few boys," says the writer, "leave the Public Schools able to converse freely in modern languages; the presence of so many interpreters in the British Army is absolute evidence on this point." The average parent on reading this passage says to himself, "How true! What a scandal!" etc. But why does he say so? Because the greater number of our soldiers are at present fighting the Germans in France, and therefore French and German would be "*useful*" to them at this particular moment. But other portions of the British Army are fighting the Turks, and therefore the argument, if used as a reason for insisting on colloquial French and German as part of our curriculum, inevitably applies also to colloquial Turkish.

It is impossible to escape from this conclusion, because all the writers and speakers in the report (all, that is, who are not themselves engaged in

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education) argue from exactly the same standpoint. Thus Mr. A. M. Samuel, speaking "as a manufacturer who has been right through the mill," insists upon the necessity for "a thorough knowledge of political economy, of the theories of Bagehot, Jevons, Friedrich List, and Adam Smith, a knowledge of industrial organization, and of the theories of Goschen" (p. 40). He does not indeed say that Eton boys should actually be expected to have an exhaustive acquaintance with these works before they leave school (together, by the way, with their proficiency in the thirty-seven other branches of learning demanded by various gentlemen in the report), "but the foundations," says Mr. Samuel, "must be laid at school. Political economy should be compulsorily taught," he says, "in all secondary schools." But if so, then how about the opinions (p. 5 of the report) of the gentleman whose bitter complaint against Eton is due to the fact that the authorities omitted to teach him Spanish there, before the year 1870? This gentleman has, so I gather from his letter, spent his time since leaving school in some gun works. Now it is difficult to see how an exhaustive knowledge of the theories of Goschen would have helped him to construct howitzers, yet if Mr.

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Samuel had lived early enough to have had his way with Eton, before the seeker after Spanish arrived there, this 1870 gentleman would have had just as abiding a grievance against political economy as he now has against the classics.

"Political economy happens to be "*necessary*" and "*useful*" and "*of value*" (and all the rest of it) to the type of man Mr. Samuel wants, but its *value* and *use* and *necessity* just at this moment to the type of man Sir Douglas Haig wants is not conspicuously apparent. The fact is that political economy is of just about as much *use* to Sir Douglas Haig as the "forming of fours" is to Mr. Marcus Samuel.

### COLONEL SHIRLEY AND THE "BRUTAL MATERIALIST"

In the same manner we find Colonel Shirley condemning the classics "because," says he, "they have been *useless* to me for all practical purposes" (p. 28). He then remarks that without the classics he might have been a "brutal materialist" (p. 28); it therefore follows that to save a man from becoming a brutal materialist is an utterly *useless* thing to do, for all *practical purposes*, and this is exactly not only Colonel Shirley's position but that of the other

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"reformers" whom Lord Desborough has collected round him.

Their gospel in fact is this, that it does not matter in the least whether a scheme of education trains a boy up to become a brutal materialist or not, so long as the subjects taught him are of *practical value*.

We have seen something of this "brutal materialism" in Belgium, and elsewhere during the last two years, and that Colonel Shirley should have chosen this particular moment to proclaim that it is a matter of no very great consequence whether a boy becomes a brutal materialist at school or not, so long as the masters stuff him with some mixture which will enable him to shoulder his way through the crowd, the enunciation, I say, of this axiom by Colonel Shirley is peculiarly illustrative of the attitude taken up by the deputation (i.e. its members are utterly blind to the trend of events and the general spirit of the time).

But if it is, according to Colonel Shirley, of no *practical value* to save a man from brutal materialism, what then is, in his opinion, of *practical value*?

Why, bless me, modern languages, of course. How silly you are, says the Colonel. But in

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what sense then are modern languages of practical value, if to rescue boys from brutal materialism is not a thing of practical value.

Really, replies the good Colonel, you are very dull. Why modern languages are of value from the point of view of "mere culture and polish" (p. 28). It follows therefore that the getting of "mere culture and polish" is of infinitely more "value" than being saved from "brutal materialism."

"As for modern languages," says the Colonel, "their value is obvious in every higher walk of life" (p. 28).

Now do let us get to the bottom of this statement.

In what sense is Colonel Shirley using this word *value*?

To save a man from becoming a "brutal materialist" is, as he has told us, not a valuable thing to do, in what sense then is the knowledge of French or German, shall we say, a valuable thing?

Are we going to get paid highly for this knowledge? Does he mean that? If that is his meaning, viz. that a knowledge of modern languages is well paid, never was a falser statement made in this world. (I know a business man who employs a secretary to correspond for him in

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six different languages and he pays that secretary (£70 a year.)

Does Colonel Shirley mean then that in after life, as you go about your daily round, you *use* modern languages, or *employ* them in matters connected with your daily work or profession. This *may*, of course, be the case, but it is purely by chance, and it is safe to say that there is not one Englishman in ten thousand who does this. Of what *use*, in this sense, is French to an officer in command of a regiment in Calcutta. Of what *use* is German to a solicitor at Salisbury, or a banker at Exeter, or a London doctor, i.e. how many times a day will any of these men, for business or professional purposes, actually require French or German ?

About two miles from where I live is a town with a population of 6000 persons or thereabouts. How many of these people, in the actual trade or profession or manual labour by which they support themselves, *use* or *employ* French or German, or any other modern language except their own ?

A knowledge of modern languages *may*, of course, prove extraordinarily "*useful*" in the sense that at any moment in after life we *may* find ourselves in a position in which we *may* require it.

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Robinson Crusoe, when he was cast upon his desert island, found such knowledge of husbandry as he possessed extraordinarily useful, but if that be an argument for including husbandry in a school course for Mr. Crusoe's son, who is to succeed his father upon the island, it is also an argument for the exclusion of French, which is not spoken there.

"Ah, but," you may say, "we are not all Robinson Crusoes and other people may find French useful." Exactly, and so do other people find a million other subjects "*useful*," and *all* of these million subjects, according to this argument, can claim an equal place in any curriculum in proportion to their possible usefulness to any particular individual.

I am not for one moment arguing against modern languages as subjects for a Public School curriculum, no one believes in them more than I do, it is the *grounds* upon which such men as Colonel Shirley advocate this or that subject in education, which are so utterly false.

### BARON POMPOSO

No more arrogant speech has ever been uttered than that reported from the lips of Colonel Shirley in the course of this deputation; the



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officers at the Staff College, the picked brains of the British Army, are, he tells us, all of them "astoundingly ignorant" (p. 29). "They cannot," says the Colonel, "even express themselves adequately in their own mother-tongue." This sweeping condemnation necessarily includes Sir Douglas Haig, the late Lord Kitchener, and every other soldier who is proving at this very moment that the intellectual forces behind the British Army are superior to the intellectual forces behind the German army.

From the Army Colonel Shirley goes on to condemn our Public Schools because, says he, "you teach your history and your geography in watertight compartments."

Has Colonel Shirley ever read "The History of England" by C. R. L. Fletcher and Rudyard Kipling, which is an epitome of the present methods of teaching history and geography together, methods which were most certainly in use when I was a master at Marlborough over twenty years ago. Kipling's magnificent poem (written for this book) upon Drake's voyage is as good an example of a geographical exposition of one of the great events of English History as could be imagined.

I am not pointing these things out in order to

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influence those who have enlisted themselves under Lord Desborough's banner. With regard to their opinions, I may quote what Boswell once said of a certain body of critics : " Sir, they are honest in their convictions." " Yes, sir," replied Johnson, " but where do they get them from ? " Those who start upon a crusade without taking the trouble to investigate the supreme facts which underlie the matter at issue will only shout their senseless watchwords the louder when you confront them with the truth.

But according to the report, about half the parents of boys now at Eton have omitted to answer the circular bidding them join in the attack, and possibly some of these may have a lurking suspicion that schoolmasters, like other people, know something about their own business ; to some of these, therefore, my remarks may afford a passing interest.

## THE DETESTED PROFESSION

The abuse of schoolmasters was scribbled upon the pyramids long before those monuments were completed, and you will there find observations upon our profession almost as offensive as those in the document before us. The reason for this is perfectly obvious ; it was the same then

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as it is now; whenever a man as he goes through life finds himself deficient in any particular branch of information he naturally says to himself, "Now why in the name of fortune didn't they teach me that at school instead of stuffing me with all sorts of rubbish *which has been of no practical use to me afterwards?*"

I have already answered this question, though I shall return to it later, but what I wish to call particular attention to at this point is, ~~that~~ several gentlemen have joined in this crusade who are professors of high standing at our various universities, and though they, of course, know well enough that every word I have here written about this demand for so-called "*useful*" subjects is absolutely true in fact and entirely unanswerable—they have, in their speeches quoted in the report, quietly avoided this difficulty altogether.

Such gentlemen as Sir Ronald Ross, or Professor Macan, or Sir Clifford Allbutt, or Professor Turner, if they have taken the trouble to read these letters at the beginning of the report (letters, it must be noted, with which they identify themselves), know perfectly well in their hearts that what I am saying is true and right with regard to all this outcry for "*useful subjects*," in the sense the expressions are here used,

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and that what these earnest but ignorant people are asking for, what they believe that any school properly organized could provide them with, at once, without the slightest difficulty, has not and never can be provided by any curriculum that could possibly be devised by the art of man.

### STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

These good professors know this perfectly well, and thus (now that they and the gibing parents are all linked up together and made part and parcel of the same great crusade) it is extraordinarily interesting to compare the abusive letters of the parents with the speeches of the professors who have joined forces with them.

In not a single one of these ex cathedra professorial speeches do you find the expression "*useful subjects*," not one of these good men say a word about a boy learning at school "what is to be of '*practical use*' to him afterwards," they most carefully avoid touching upon the main text of the parents' gospel.

So that after the vitriolic stream poured out by the parents; the effusions of the professors leave a somewhat vapid and uncertain impression upon the mind. Instead of waving the blood-red banner of revolution as they march towards the

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towers of Windsor, the professors seem to bear over their spectacles and utter platitudes which must have sorely tried the patience of their more spiteful colleagues. As we contemplate this hybrid assembly, there may be others who, like myself, remember how their childish imagination used to be captured by the vision of that strange pastureland where "the cow and the bear shall feed." But "their young ones," I can most assuredly promise you, will never "lie down together," for the professors know a great deal better than to send their children to the sort of schools which the "parents" intend to create.

There is indeed in the picture of benevolent gentlemen like Sir Ronald Ross joining hands with those who, with the solemnity of ignorance, are heaping every conceivable term of virulent and senseless abuse upon the worse paid and less fortunate members of that great calling to which Sir Ronald himself belongs, there is in this picture something so peculiarly English that in contemplating it I am reminded of a conversation I had not many years ago with a well-known "savant" of a great Swiss university. This learned man had written a treatise in which he attempted to explain why English public opinion, when it gives itself up to some abstract question

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—such, for instance, as the reform of education—always moves in a particular direction. He suggested, I remember, amongst other things, that since no Englishman is ever allowed to allude to the profession to which he belongs in anything but terms of the humblest apology, the most successful Englishmen are in consequence those who are busiest in undermining the foundations of the particular calling they follow. Under the specious pretext of “reform,” these gentlemen devote themselves to kicking away the various ladders by which they have risen, while upon the *après moi le deluge* principle they manage to draw very handsome salaries in the top-most branches of the vocations they are doing their utmost to discredit and destroy.

### OUR NATIONAL VICE

And the Swiss professor went on to point out that in England this plan of campaign is never considered in the least hypocritical or dishonest, because nothing will ever shake the conviction embedded in the very marrow of the nation's bones that the art, the religion, the education, the naval and military organization, the law, the what-you-will of their own country is, of necessity, in a hopeless condition of paralytic decrepitude.

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It follows, therefore, that the occasional spasms of intellectual fervour in the direction of so-called "reform" to which the nation from time to time treats itself are always of a purely destructive character.

This, roughly speaking, was the gist of a clever foreigner's conclusions, and there may be a certain amount of truth in the picture he draws. For the English, as a nation, are not, as a matter of fact, so particularly interested in reform; if they were they would make some sort of attempt to investigate the real conditions under which the different institutions of their country are carried on.

What they really delight in is to join in a series of freebooting expeditions against those who labour in the various departments of our national life.

This characteristic intrudes itself upon our notice with peculiar force when we come to investigate the conduct of those engaged in the present crusade. If Lord Desborough and his band of abusive parents had really any cause of reform at heart, they would not have begun by solemnly cursing with bell, book, and candle, the schoolmasters for doing just what the professors who have joined hands with Lord Desborough

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know in their hearts, that all schoolmasters of all peoples and nations and kindreds and tongues, have done, and must do, and can only do, till the end of time.

But these "reformers" know very well that they are on perfectly safe ground because the more ignorant and senseless the outcry the larger the number of crusaders who will rally to the call.

They abuse and laugh at the schoolmaster's efforts in exactly the same spirit as that of the yokel who, at the beginning of the war, stood grinning at the drill-sergeant as he tried to shape his squad of recruits in some field by the roadside.

"What's the good o' formin' fours," they say; "you ain't goin' to do that when it comes to fightin'."

An amusing instance of this eminently national characteristic occurred not long before the war. Some expert wrote upon the thesis that the submarine would be in the future by far the most important arm in naval warfare; immediately the axe-grinders, who knew that they would find an easy road to publicity by exploiting the morbid spirit of pessimism inherent in the English character, began shouting out "Scrap the Dreadnoughts" (just as all these good people are now shouting out "Scrap our present system



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of Public School education"). They boomed out their gospel of destruction, and it sounded convincing enough. "Scrap the Dreadnoughts; we have always told you that these huge, clumsy, floating castles for which you are being forced to pay so many millions a year are an antiquated fraud," and it is not in the least an exaggeration to say that nine people out of ten believed them.

It is natural enough, therefore, that our present system of higher education, as being the prime cause of our presumed inefficiency and insular stupidity in every conceivable direction (a stupidity which prompts us, for instance, to build such useless things as Dreadnoughts), always comes in for the lion's share of contempt, ridicule, and abuse.

It is necessary to use the term "higher education" because it has become current, though it always seems to me peculiarly unfortunate. The expression "higher education" is surely bad, because it necessitates the corresponding term of "lower education," which is offensive. "Longer" and "shorter" education might be nearer the mark. But whether you call it "higher" and "lower" or "longer" and "shorter" it is all the same to the great mass of the nation; they take

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it as a *sine qua non* that English education *qua* education (i.e. brain-development as apart from character training) is so contemptible a thing that to attempt to defend it is merely the act of an ignorant and bigoted fool.

So that while Lord Desborough beats down the apex, Lord Haldane blasts away at the foundation. For a politician who is "out" knows that one of the quickest ways back into the limelight is to thump his drum and shout out "reform (i.e. scrap) our antiquated and insular methods of instruction."

Not long ago Professor Sadler wrote an admirable letter to the *Times* in which he dealt with Lord Haldane's suggestions. Anybody who read the letter could see at once that it is Professor Sadler, and not Lord Haldane, who is dealing with the real points at issue. Yet I have not, so far, discovered that Mr. Sadler's letter has been answered (if I have missed the answer to it, I apologize), but of this I am certain, that not only is the letter quite unanswerable, but that also Lord Haldane will be perfectly safe in ignoring it. The great mass of the nation have no desire to be informed upon the real points, and if you tried to force Professor Sadler's letter upon their notice they would only be extremely hurt at your

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adopting a course of action which might spoil their zest for the hunt.

### A UNIVERSAL BELIEF

• This, however, is by the way. I am dealing now with so-called "higher" education, and before I go any further let me here say that when I published a book in defence of our Public School system, the whole of the Press (the book was reviewed in practically every newspaper) received it with a sympathy and commendation far beyond anything I ever hoped for; if, therefore, this pamphlet is dealt with in any newspaper, I most earnestly ask the reviewer to tell me whether, broadly speaking, I am right in what I am now going to say.

Every attack upon (or criticism of) our higher education is based upon the conviction that we in England have failed to produce, *in any direction whatsoever*, a scheme for intellectual training, as apart from character training, which is not utterly inferior in every respect to the schemes in use in Germany, Switzerland, France, and most other Continental countries. This is always regarded as an axiom, or self-evident truth, which is taken for granted.

It is most important to keep this in mind,

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because any force such attacks as the one we are now dealing with may possess arises entirely from beliefs of this character. The ordinary average British parent, i.e. the "man in the street" or whatever you choose to call the individual who represents the general trend of public opinion, puts it somewhat in this way: "Our education in England is no good, our schools are first rate at training character, but there is no such thing throughout the length and breadth of England as a school where you get a decent education."

Let us consider this statement just for one moment.

What is the aim of this sort of education that we are supposed to have failed so utterly to achieve in any direction whatsoever?

In all humbleness of spirit I submit that its aim is to produce just those qualities of resource, invention, thorough knowledge of the subjects in hand, mental discipline, and ready initiative which our Navy has shown in such a remarkable degree throughout the war, particularly in minor conflicts such as the Dover raid (April 24, 1917).

Let us reverse the rôles for a moment, let us suppose that the Germans were an Island Power, and that they had dealt with us in the Battle of

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Jütland as we dealt with them, that they had proved, as we have, that they were still the first Naval Power. Can you not hear the triumphant voices of Lord Haldane and Lord Desborough shouting out, "There, I always told you so. Look what their education has done for these people!"

But as we English have done this thing nobody is to be allowed to whisper that our success upon the sea can have anything to do with our general system of brain-development or mental training in the Navy—quite apart from any question of character training whatsoever.

No. It is impossible to admit this (if the axiom I have just mentioned be indeed a true one), because according to the axiom *none* of our schools, as places of intellectual training, are "in the same street" with those of Germany, Switzerland, etc.

But Osborne is a school, Dartmouth is a school, and the battleship is also, in a sense, the continuation school from Dartmouth.

### DIFFUSION IN EDUCATION •

If the writers and speakers quoted in Lord Desborough's report say to me at this point, "Yes, and it is just some such scheme as they have in use at Osborne and Dartmouth that we

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want you 'blind,' 'ignorant,' 'antediluvian' old schoolmasters to introduce into the Public Schools," I can only reply that some such scheme as the Navy scheme is just exactly what they are *not* asking for ; for I shall presently show that the Navy scheme of education, though splendidly thorough and possessing that fundamental requisite of *continuity* which is the underlying necessity of all educational schemes for the young, is at the same time confined with extreme rigidity to a certain definite track.

### THE WONDERFUL WASHERWOMEN

But is that the case with the scheme these "reformers" are now demanding ? If so, then how about Mr. Samuel's political economy, which, as I have pointed out, would be of no *use* to Sir Douglas Haig ; or the 1870 gentleman's Spanish, which can hardly be included in Captain Bathurst's demand for a land-agency training at the Public School ? Or Sir Ronald Ross's dictum, laid down in quite definite and unmistakable language on page 35 of the report, that Public School boys cannot be considered to have *started in mathematics at all* until they have "some knowledge of the calculus" ? How, I ask in all humbleness of spirit, can this new curriculum

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advocated by the "reformers," a curriculum which is to satisfy (1) Sir Ronald's demand for the calculus; (2) the demand for a colloquial knowledge of those five modern languages possessed (as we are told on p. 6 of the report) by "the washerwomen of the southern hemisphere"; (3) Mr. Samuel's imperative order (backed by the whole Chamber of Commerce—think of that !) for political economy; (4) Captain Bathurst's claim for a knowledge of the foundations of estate management; and (5) the charmingly modest request of Sir Clifford Allbutt, that in addition to all these things a boy should also know *very well* (note the expression—p. 26 of the report), "the evolution of the world, such laws as the conservation of energy, the solar system, and the place we have in the planetary system," etc.—how, I ask, can such a curriculum as this be said to resemble that adopted by the Naval Authorities which (measured by the standard of Lord Desborough's "reformers") is so narrow, that though "modern" in every respect (as, of course, it must necessarily be), and therefore delivered from the incubus of the classics, does not for all that even include German as a compulsory subject for all?

But let us imagine for a moment that our

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"reformers" have been given *carte blanche*, that they have got rid of the "blind," "dishonest," "antediluvian" old fogies who are at present teaching in the Public Schools, and put in their own men. (The said "reformers" have, of course, got their fingers on these men and know exactly the salaries they would require and whether the management can afford to pay them.) Supposing, I say, the "reformers," having put in their new teachers and got their scheme to work have procured something of the desired result, and Tommy Brown and Billy Jones do actually under these new masters get well over the differential calculus, and passing, as Sir Ronald puts in, through the "front door of mathematics," they do actually begin to contemplate "the beauties of mathematical science that are to be seen inside that great temple" (p. 35), while at the same time, fired by the example of the dusky washerwomen, they succeed in obtaining their colloquial knowledge of those five modern languages, during the odd moments which they are not devoting to the political economy of Mr. Samuel, or Captain Bathurst's mysteries of estate management, which they could no doubt master in the intervals between those strenuous hours of study required for satisfying Sir Clifford Allbutt's



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demand that they should know "*very well*" most of the facts of the universe—supposing, I say, that Billy and Tommy do accomplish all these things—alas—and alas—they would still fall under the lash of Professor Turner, because they have neglected their geology (p. 24), whilst Lieutenant-Colonel Shirley, who speaks with all the stern authority of a military instructor, would have no word of contempt strong enough for the general standard of their attainments, since they would still be in one respect, even as they were before Lord Desborough took them in hand, "astoundingly ignorant of history and geography" (Colonel Shirley, p. 19).

### THE "MASTER OF THE HUNT"

In the vision, however, which took hold upon me of the ideal academy planned by the new "reform" club, I thought that some unforeseen convulsion of nature had at the last moment deprived those who drew up the syllabus of the services both of Professor Turner and Colonel Shirley, but even if that were actually to be the case, we are not by any means at the end of the perfections unto which Billy and Tommy are to attain; for if you look at page 18 of the report you will find Lord Desborough himself the

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Master of the Hunt," at the very moment when the *corpus vile* of personified schoolmasterdom is about to be thrown to the yelping pack, casually mentioning the fact that after all he is going to retain the classics. "The classics," says Lord Desborough, "afford the highest mental training you can possibly get," and that, of course, is why he states in the opening letter of the report that "the classics are a deplorable waste of time."

### THE TRADITIONAL CHARGE AGAINST • SCHOOLMASTERS

I wish most emphatically to protest that I am holding no brief whatsoever for the classics. I am not myself what is termed a "classical man," i.e. my own subjects were history and modern languages, and I cannot, therefore, be said to merit the sneers of Mr. Samuel who, on page 41 of the report, once more "trots out" the oft-repeated insult against classical teachers, that the classics are retained because those who teach them can teach nothing else, and that therefore these men—though everybody knows that the classics ought to be scrapped—fight and struggle to retain them.

This gibe is not only levelled against all those who are at present teaching the classics in Eng-

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land, but it gives me some satisfaction to point out to Mr. Samuel that his witticisms also include certainly not less than forty men who, to my own personal knowledge, rushed off *the moment the war was declared* to join the colours, and who now lie buried upon the battlefields of France. These men, according to Mr. Samuel, though mean enough to refuse to lay down their precious classics for their country's good, did not hesitate for a moment to lay down their lives for the same object.

### THE SPIRIT OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

I can most certainly assure Mr. Samuel, though he will not and indeed *cannot* believe me, that if in the scholastic profession the men whom the schoolmasters *really* trust, not the men who are always spouting at conferences but the men at the top who are really doing their job, if these men after consulting together and after consulting also with the *real* national umpires on these points (who, as I shall explain in a moment, are not schoolmasters at all)—if I say, after due consultation, such a body of men as this were to decide that it was essential to the good of education that the classics (or any other subject) ought to be “scrapped,” there would not be one school-

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master in fifty, whether he taught the condemned subject or not; who would not without a moment's hesitation fall into line with the general verdict.

It would be just the same in the Army or Navy with regard to any "reform" that was known by the whole service to be necessary.

Mr. Samuel and his Chamber of Commerce may *think* they understand this sort of spirit, but they can no more understand it really than a Choctaw Indian can understand Sir Ronald's calculus.

When Mr. Samuel and his Chamber of Commerce dispatched their command for political economy to the Public Schools, they no doubt imagined that the reason why they did not receive their answer by return of post to the effect that "your esteemed order shall be at once attended to, yours obediently," etc., was because the classical schoolmasters were holding the fort against them, egged on to this piece of villainy by those terrible ogres of antediluvianism the Oxford Dons.

### THE REAL TRIBUNAL

But, as a matter of fact, it is neither the schoolmasters nor the Oxford Dons, who deal with these education orders from the Chamber of Com-

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merce ; these peremptory commands, are deal with by a different tribunal altogether.

It is such men as the late Lord Cromer and Lord Bryce and the late Lord Redesdale and a score of others at the very top of the ladder with regard to their *general* capacity, i.e. *thinkers* who are not mere *moneygetters*, but men of world-wide outlook and brilliant attainments, it is these men who, upon questions of this kind, are the real arbiters between the schoolmasters and the Chamber of Commerce.

Men such as these thoroughly understand the elementary principles upon which education is based, and therefore the three whose names I have mentioned, the moment the hue and cry was raised, all took the side of the antediluvian old schoolmasters.

What are the politics of Lord Bryce ? Are they those of the old " port-wine Tory " school ? If ever there was an advanced thinker upon national and social questions it is Lord Bryce, but what does he say when it comes to the question of revolutionizing Oxford and all the rest of it ? —because, as is pointed out more than once in Lord Desborough's report, *Oxford* is the *real* culprit ; she is the " chief offender," etc. But what does Lord Bryce say on this point ? " Ox-

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for, he says, "performs the function of teaching people to think as well as any university in the world."

I have not the actual quotation by me, and Lord Bryce may have said, "Our universities perform," etc.—but as he certainly included Oxford and as in attacks of this kind Oxford is always the villain of the piece, I am sure that I have represented his attitude correctly.

And what did the late Lord Cromer say? (I happen to have kept his actual words.) Lord Cromer says that "if we do not continue to pay sufficient attention to classical education in this country it will be *a most disastrous thing*." Could any words possibly be stronger than these?

The late Lord Redesdale (in one of the best books of memoirs that has ever been written) on this question of the classics said something which I earnestly commend to the notice of the whole of that devoted band whom Lord Desborough has collected together—parents and professors alike.

With my schoolmaster instinct I should like to make all these good folk (who for the sake of brevity may be henceforth termed "the cocksure brigade"), I should like to make all these

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possessors, in their own opinion, of the philosopher's stone, write out what Lord Redesdale said upon this point every morning after breakfast, for the rest of their lives.

I will quote Lord Redesdale's words in full. "I should like," he says, "if it be not deemed too impertinence, to say one word here upon this much-vexed question of a classical education, and of Greek in particular. It is very easy, very cheap, to say that Greek and Latin are of no use in learning modern languages. I have had some experience in the study of both, and I am distinctly of opinion that nothing has helped me so much in the acquisition of even the most out-of-the-way modern languages as the work I did under Jelf, dissecting every sentence and every particle in the 'Medea' with the help of his Greek grammar.

"No language has been so thoroughly analysed—perhaps because none has been so philosophically constructed—as Greek. The man who starts upon the study of modern languages, after having dissected, conscientiously and searchingly, the work of one of the Greek giants with the help of Jelf's great book, has insensibly converted his mind into a sort of comparative grammar, he has acquired the knowledge of points of difference

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and points of similarity, that is to say, of comparison, of which Buffon said, 'Nous ne pouvons acquies de connaissance que par la voie de la comparaison,' although the aid given to him is, of course, indirect, it is none the less real. He is in the position of a man who goes to a new gymnastic exercise with trained muscles, and therefore with marvellous ease, as compared with the man whose muscles and sinews are flabby and slack. That it is a discipline of the highest significance few will be found to deny.

"When Darwin spent seven years in dissecting barnacles it was not simply a knowledge of barnacle nature at which he was aiming; he was training his mind for other purposes.

"Apart from the beauties which they reveal to us, and so without any reference to the important question of culture, I am in favour of the study of the classics, as a gymnastic exercise of the brain, as a dissection of barnacles, which yields far higher results than could be gained by merely learning French and German without any other preparation. In that way a man would attain what must simply be a more or less glorified courier's knowledge, practical no doubt, up to a certain degree, but unscientific and failing him at crucial points. The best



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Oriental scholars whom I have known have all been men who attacked their Eastern studies armed with the weapon furnished by a classical education. In China Sir Harry Parkes was an admirable oral interpreter. But he himself, as I have said elsewhere, always regretted his want of classical training—nor would it be possible to compare him with that great scholar Sir Thomas Wade. In Japan Von Siebold was as fluent a talker as could be found. He was the son of the famous physician and naturalist who was attached to the Dutch Mission at Deshima, and had learnt Japanese ‘in ambulando.’ But it would be childish to name him with such learned men as Satow, Aston, and Chamberlain, men who brought the training and literature of the West to their studies in the East. It is not without significance to note the great respect which such men were able to command, whereas the mere parrot, however clever, was held in little more esteem than a head waiter. Think of Basil Chamberlain appointed to the Chair of ancient Japanese literature in the University of Tokio.

“And our own beautiful English, the language of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton; will that not suffer if a false utilitarianism should succeed in banishing the classics from our schools? Even

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now it is surrounded by enemies, but I shudder to think of what might become after two centuries of nothing but transoceanic influences unchecked by scholarships."

The difficulty which confronts the schoolmaster is always the same character; he has to decide between Lord Redesdale and Colonel Shirley, and he knows for certain that the "many-headed" will always be on Colonel Shirley's side.

### THE CHOICE OF SUBJECTS IN A SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Nor is it at all easy for the schoolmaster to defend himself; for the reasons which drive him and Lord Cromer and Lord Bryce all into the same "forgotten corner" are somewhat complicated.

If, for instance, schoolmasters do not obey the order for political economy, it is not in the least because political economy is not a most admirable subject of education.

On the contrary, political economy is a most splendid subject to teach in a school; and yet for all that the late Lord Cromer or Lord Bryce or the late Lord Redesdale might (if they were drawing up a curriculum) reject it.

If they rejected it, it would be because such

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men as these know that in education the first thing of all is thoroughness, and that you cannot get thoroughness without continuity and rigidity ; and that therefore you are bound *not* to select subjects just because this or that man says they will be *useful* in after life to his son or to the clerks he wants in his business.

Because if you go on these lines the claims upon you will be endless and you will thus lose continuity and stability and thoroughness, and worse than this (if that were possible), you will thus breed amongst the boys themselves a spirit of perpetual restlessness; the boy whose father has a wine business at Oporto will be always saying to himself, "Now why aren't these 'old blighters' teaching me Portuguese?" whilst the boy who is going out to join his uncle with a view to succeeding to the family business in Bechuanaland will consider that the whole world is being turned upside down because he is not being taught Tall and Sechili, and I can hear very plainly the pompous voice of Colonel Shirley saying to Mr. Alington, "Sir, it is a monstrous thing that at Eton you still refuse to teach even the languages which are spoken in our own colonies."

It must be obvious, therefore, to anybody who

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thinks about it that in a Public School you cannot do your duty by Billy and Tommy (i.e. the *general average ordinary* boy) if you work on the lines laid down in the report.

### THE SPECIALIST AND GENERAL EDUCATION

And this is why such men as Sir Ronald Ross are the very last folk in the world (with the exception of such gentlemen as Mr. Samuel and Colonel Shirley) who ought to be consulted upon the drawing up of a school curriculum.

What is Sir Ronald Ross doing, according to his own account, at the present moment? He tells us (on p. 35) that he is "even studying mathematics in connexion with pathology and the spread of diseases." •

No sentence ever written better epitomizes in a few words the very quintessence of specialization.

And so this specialist of the specialists complains of the mathematical teaching of the school to which he sends his boys, "because," says he, "my boys remained in front of the front door of mathematics, but the front door was kept shut. They saw nothing of the beauties of mathematics," etc. And what does all this actually mean?

It means that Sir Ronald, being a specialist in

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certain branches of pathology (which he studies *through* mathematics—think of it—the brain reels) —Sir Ronald, being a man of this type, is concerned not at all with the political economy of Mr. Samuel, but only with that part of the school training in which he personally happens to be interested, and in this department everything must be so preposterously advanced that a boy cannot be considered, he says, to have any knowledge of mathematics at all till he has got his teeth well into the calculus.

And there is also this further point : advanced specialists, such as Sir Ronald Ross, when they join in a symposium to debate upon some general course of study, are often all of them very apt to become concerned with telling each other what wonderful men they all are, and how when the doctor orders them a rest they never really need get bored, because they can always, if they want to amuse themselves, study their pathology through the medium of their mathematics, so that in descanting upon the dissipations in which they indulge, they lose sight of the object of the symposium, viz. to draw up some practical course of study.

The children of such men as Sir Ronald Ross, provided that their fathers have taken the pre-  
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caution to marry a sufficiently "Girtonized" young lady, may very likely be ready to pass through the "front door of mathematics" at a moment when Billy and Tommy (their equals in age) would, if you asked them "How long would it take seven men to mow a four-acre field?" etc., be perfectly certain to bring out their answer in pounds, shillings, and pence. But such boys as Billy and Tommy are altogether excluded from the sphere of Sir Ronald's calculations; for his claim really amounts to this, that the school curriculum should be drawn up with a view to the infant prodigy and not with a view to the ordinary boy.

This claim only demonstrates the fact that because you can study your pathology through the medium of your mathematics, it does not, therefore, at all follow that you know anything whatever about education. Because the very worst thing for these infant prodigies is to be taken on too far at an early age.

### THE GREAT CONTRIBUTION MADE BY SIR RONALD ROSS TO THE CAUSE OF EDUCATION

Sir Ronald has, in fact, in his speech in this report, made a most valuable contribution to the literature of pedagogics, for if ever you wanted

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to explain to a young schoolmaster exactly how a plan of education ought *not* to be conceived, you would give him Sir Ronald's speech to read, and point out to him the dangers of over-specialization.

As a rule—I do not say that it is so always (it was not so, for instance, in Darwin's case), but as a rule—the specialist is far too much wrapt up in himself to draw up, or even to help to suggest, broad schemes for the generality of mankind. •

And he is also much inclined to certain esoteric habits of thought which lead him, unconsciously perhaps, to believe that he himself and the other specialists are the only ones who are actually, up to the present moment, numbered amongst the elect.

But the schoolmaster, i.e. the *drudge* (and if he is a good schoolmaster he revels and glories in being a drudge), the schoolmaster must not concern himself too closely with these mutual admiration societies, because, as I have before pointed out, if he draws up his curriculum to the satisfaction of Sir Ronald Ross, he will thereby preclude the possibility of also satisfying the money-getting instincts of Mr. Samuel.

Or if he could *just* manage to satisfy these two

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there are a hundred others left whose claims will be thereby neglected altogether.

How about Sir Edward Elgar, for instance, who, if he were to send his son to Eton, would, according to the principles laid down by Mr. Samuel and Sir Ronald Ross, be perfectly justified in complaining that "all the more intricate methods of Oratorio composition were disgracefully neglected at Eton"? Such a complaint would be quite as reasonable as that made by Sir Ronald Ross.

The problem, therefore, in drawing up a school curriculum is not "how many votes would the classics obtain in the Chamber of Commerce," but "how many thousands of Mr. Samuels go to make up one Lord Cromer."

### OUR NAVY SCHEME OF EDUCATION

The Navy scheme of education is, as I have said, extremely rigid; such science as is required is of an elementary character and is entirely subordinated to the study of mathematics, to which so much time is devoted as to prevent the possibility of thirty or forty other odd subjects being added, on the principles followed by the "reformers"—i.e. the Navy scheme affords a complete contradiction to the principle of



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*diffusion* in education, which is advocated throughout in the report under notice.

And moreover our Navy scheme of education is *not* devised with a view to the subjects studied under it being "*of use*" to the cadets afterwards, in the sense that the expression is so continuously employed in the report. Let me put it in this way. When the complete history of the Battle of Jutland comes to be written it will *not*, I promise you, be discovered that Sir John Jellicoe and Sir David Beatty were either immediately before it, or during its continuance, engaged in working out any of those more abstruse abstract mathematical problems which they had to tackle in order to pass the examinations in the higher grades of the service to which they belong. That part of their education was the scaffolding which disappeared as soon as the building was complete. This really, if you come to think of it, is obvious, for if it were not so, they surely should each of them have had a senior wrangler beside them upon their flagships.

## SEVERAL COMMON FALLACIES IN EDUCATION

It is absolutely necessary, at the expense of the most wearisome reiteration, to keep on hammering away at this fallacy of the "*useful*" subject in

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education, because there is not one person in a hundred who, either consciously or unconsciously, has not got this notion at the back of his mind when he is reasoning about education. People believe that just as they are able to present a boy with a revolver which he can *use* in the trench fighting, so the schoolmaster can present the boy with the mathematical knowledge which the boy can "*use*" in the sighting of a field-gun ; but this is not the case. A mathematical *training* is of the last importance to a gunner, but when it comes to sighting the gun he goes through no arithmetical or mathematical calculation on the spot, because all *that* is done by a mechanical instrument. It is just the same with a banker ; a mathematical *training* is of the utmost value to him, but when he goes into the bank, the amount of higher mathematics in actual *use* in that establishment is not appreciable ; indeed, as time goes on, monetary calculations, the calculations of interest and so on, are being more and more usurped by some sort of calculating machine or mechanical process, which has this advantage over the human brain, that it cannot make a mistake, so that mathematics are not one jot more *useful* than classics, as the expression is always employed.

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The curious thing about the fallacy is that every one who stops to think can see through it without any difficulty. If mathematics were really "*useful*" in this sense, in the banking or any other profession, if, that is to say, the more mathematics you knew and the cleverer you were at the subject the more *use* or *value* you would be to the banker or the controller of some big industrial concern, then surely the Rothschilds, the Armstrongs, the Liptons, etc., would be driven to pay the senior wranglers £50,000 a year apiece.

But no matter how much you may drive your point into the heads of individuals, it is nevertheless impossible really to shake the *general* conviction with regard to the necessity for "*useful*" subjects. This is why Lord Haldane and Lord Desborough have only got to shout out "Scrap our education," and the whole nation bellows back "Hooray!" I know, therefore, that I cannot eradicate the *cause* of the mob's belief in the sort of gospel Lord Desborough preaches, but I have by a practical demonstration upset the axiom that we in England cannot "off our own bat" provide some scheme of higher education which, when put to the test, is not so very inferior to that of our neighbours.

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### TWO SCHEMES OF NATIONAL EDUCATION BROUGHT FACE TO FACE

For it seems to me that the results of our Navy scheme of education (conceived, as I have shown, upon lines exactly opposite to those sketched out in Lord Desborough's report) have completely upset the axiom that we in England cannot produce a scheme of higher education comparable to those produced elsewhere.

In our struggle with Germany upon the sea, two systems of education *qua* education (i.e. mental training quite apart from character training) have been put upon their trial the one against the other. Modern naval warfare is, I imagine, about as scientific a game of chess upon the waters as can be conceived, and you might train character till you were black in the face, but that would not avail you in an engagement such as the Battle of Jutland, if you did not also combine this character-training with a scheme for training the *intellect*, not hopelessly inferior at any rate to that employed by your adversary.

For the purposes of my argument, therefore, there is no necessity to prove that the intellectual training of our Navy is *better* than that of the German navy, all I wish to show is that this

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great thesis of our being unable to produce schemes of home manufacture for training the intellect breaks down when tested by the actual events which have occurred in the struggle upon the sea since this war broke out.

And what of our Army? Had we no scheme for mental training there before the war?

I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that for many years before the war the scheme of education followed in our Army was regarded by the vast majority of the nation in much the same light as Lord Desborough's "reformers" regard our Public School schemes of education. It was regarded, that is to say, with the utmost possible contempt, and Colonel Shirley's scornful and insulting remarks, which I have before quoted, upon the intellectual attainments of the British officer most faithfully reflect the general feeling of the nation. Our methods of military education were in fact always supposed to be altogether inferior to those of Germany; the British officer was supposed to be a very good sportsman, but a person who did not take his profession seriously; a person who spent far too much time in hunting and shooting, etc. Before the war the man in the street most firmly believed that if a division of our Army were to be matched

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against a picked division of the German army of equal numbers to ours, we should undoubtedly get the worst of it.

What were the facts with regard to that trained Army which we sent out at the beginning of the war? It proved itself equal to about three times its number when it did meet the picked troops of Germany. Yet could that have happened if we had had no scheme of military education (as apart from character training) comparable to the one in use in Germany?

And if our Army did in any respect fall short, it was not in its *education*; the disadvantages it laboured under were due to the fact that our Army estimates had for a long period been so systematically cut down as to make it impossible to provide a sufficient number of machine-guns and so on.

You will often see it stated that the Germans "*foresaw*" how many machine-guns, etc., would be wanted; these statements strike a grim note of humour when they fall upon the ears of the thousands of crippled and wounded British officers who are filling our hospitals at the present moment.

"The Germans '*foresaw*' the need for this, that, and the other"—yes, and so did hundreds of

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British officers "foresee" that all sorts of things would be wanted, but that it was not the slightest use asking for them. It was not much good asking Lord Haldane for more guns when he was cutting down the supply of men, but our lack of equipment was not due to any lack of education or foresight in the Army itself; if the soldiers had ceased to ask for such things as they wanted it was only because the politicians had told them so many thousands of times that it was no use crying for the moon.

And, further, when we come to investigate the question as to whether or not we had an efficient scheme of military education before the war, a far more astonishing circumstance emerges. The British officer, who according to popular opinion lived in the hunting-field, whilst the non-commissioned officer spent his time in the public-house—these two men, the moment they were given a free hand, conjured into existence in an incredibly short time an army of some millions of men which is now proving itself more than a match for the armies of Germany.

All these things are not done by *character* training alone, there must be trained brains, and trained intellects as well, to accomplish such things as these.

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You would have thought that, after what our Navy and Army have done in this war, the passion for our great national pastime of crab, crab, crab, and crab again, would have somewhat abated.

Not a bit of it, I assure you. Mr. H. G. Wells has just written a book to prove that the trained brains behind the British forces have had nothing whatever to do with any successes we may have won. These successes are, according to Mr. Wells, the result of a great wave of something-or-other which has swept over somewhere-or-other, like a mighty something-or-other, etc. etc., and Kitchener, Haig, and Jellicoe don't count. This sort of talk is, as a matter of fact, mere puerile *mush* or *piff-paff*, and the only interesting question about it is, why does a clever man like Mr. Wells indulge in it?

The answer is that he knows he *must* write in this strain or somebody else will, and he would then lose his place as head boy of the national seer class.

But if we are driven to admit that we have in our Army a scheme for training the intellect (as well as for training character) not essentially inferior to that of our neighbours, we must at the same time remember that the British officer is, as



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far as his intellectual training goes, the direct product of the Public School. Not one officer in five goes to a special "coach" or tutor before he enters the Army. (I will not go into this matter; when my book on Public Schools was published, my statements with regard to this point were challenged, but the figures I gave could not be upset.)

### THE CHARGE AGAINST THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

We are thus forced to the following conclusion, that though we have produced native schemes of mental training (i.e. our Navy and Army schemes) which are proved by results to be as efficient as those produced by our neighbours, yet our Public Schools are still *all* of them running along in their monkish and obsolete grooves.

Because that is the charge it is not that Eton is bad, whilst some others are satisfactory, for no English Public School can escape the solemn condemnation pronounced against it, in the opening letter of the report, that it omits to turn out its pupils "able to converse freely in modern languages."

And if we ask how many modern languages? Surely to place the number at anything below that achieved by the "washerwomen of the

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"Southern Hemisphere" (p. 6) would be an insult to the new class of pedagogue whom the reformers intend to install. (Forgive me for again alluding to those swarthy prodigies, but they have cheered me up more than anything I have come across all through the war.)

All Public Schools, according to the report, are, from the point of view of education as apart from character training, in a perfectly hopeless condition, and such terms of abuse as "gross stupidity" (p. 3), "blindness" (p. 5), "arrogance and bigotry" (p. 6), etc., are heaped without stint upon the heads of all schoolmasters indiscriminately.

But is all this fair? I have shown that we have produced two efficient schemes of education, one of which is closely bound up with our Public School schemes. Are we the sort of nation who, possessing this capability in some directions, absolutely refuse to apply it in others. Granted my argument with regard to the Army and Navy schemes, would there not have appeared by now, somewhere or other upon the Public School horizon, one or two educationists or bodies of educationists possessing the same sort of capacity as those who drew up these other schemes?

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### COMPETITION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION

For, when people talk about the older Public Schools being bound down by tradition and all the rest of it, that, if it be true, only strengthens my argument, because the newer Public Schools not being clogged by such traditions have all the better chance in their struggle to capture the market. In competing for the annual boy output of the kingdom, these newer schools are all the more likely to make a success of some unfettered scheme, since their rivals are hampered by tradition.

People never seem to remember that English Public Schools are in open and strenuous competition with each other—and I wish here most emphatically to insist that not more than one parent in ten sends his boy, as a matter of course, to the Public School at which he himself was educated. Ninety per cent. of British parents pick the school to which they send their boy quite apart from any considerations as to whether they were there themselves or not (this can easily be proved by taking the school list of any Public School and ticking off the number of boys whose fathers were at the school before them). Indeed my own personal experience points the other way,

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i.e. fathers as a rule are especially critical of the mental training given at the particular school at which they themselves received their education, though they do not necessarily indulge in the vulgar abuse which I have called attention to in the report before me.

And not only are the older Public Schools in strenuous competition with each other, but they are always in competition with newer schools, which start with enormous advantages.

I will instance two examples of these newer Public Schools. Gresham School, Holt, is, no doubt, an old foundation, but its entrance into the arena as a great Public School dates, I take it, from 1903, when the Fishmongers' Company spent about £45,000 on the new buildings. Oundle (from the standpoint I am taking) dates from 1883, when the Grocers' Company spent a huge sum of money in equipping the school with the best and most up-to-date buildings and plant that could be provided.

Such schools as these have, practically speaking, an unlimited purse behind them ; in fact we may say that here, " money is no object " ; neither have they these terribly sticky traditions of " the classics," etc., to hamper them. But if the self-constituted members of this new " Public

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School Reform Club " were to look at the school honours gained by Oundle in 1914, they would see that the first on the list are two *classical* scholarships at *Oxford*. In other words, these newer schools still provide, for those who want it, that classical education which the " reformers " believe to be the secret of all the evils connected with the education provided at " the older Public Schools. (Though the " reformers " indeed do propose to retain the classics, and to ease the burden which these subjects of education entail by adding thirty-seven other subjects to them.)

The " reformers " will no doubt reply to this, that the newer schools provide an excellent modern education which the older schools do not provide.

With regard to this so-often-repeated statement, that such a school as Eton, for instance, does not provide its pupils with any sort of training in so-called " modern " subjects worthy of the name, let me put my answer in this way.

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### "THE GATES OF POTSDAM"

I read the other day an article upon Eton education which was typical of hundreds of other articles of the same character. I do not remember the exact words, but the gist of the article was as follows: "No one," said the writer, "has more admiration than we have for the splendid *character* training given at this great school. Those young subalterns from Eton, who went forth amongst our first 100,000 to lay down their lives for their country, displayed a courage, a devotion to duty (an etc. etc.) never surpassed by the youth of any nation in the world, but had these splendid young fellows paid more attention to science and less to Latin verses, we should now be knocking at the gates of Potsdam."

I have already called attention to the unshakable belief rooted deep down in the popular mind that the British officer knows nothing about his job, and imbued with this popular belief, ninety-nine people out of every hundred who read such articles as this one at once say to themselves, "Of course this is an exaggerated way of putting it, but all the same the writer's view is a just one, and it is certainly a very scandalous thing that these brave young fellows should have been so

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ill-equipped, merely because the monkish old schoolmasters would stick to their 'Latin verses.' ”

### BUT WHAT ARE THE FACTS ?

For many years Eton has had its Army class, and Eton is, I believe, actually head of all the Public Schools in its number of entrances direct from the school to Woolwich and Sandhurst. What then were these “ brave young fellows ” actually doing when they were pupils at Eton ? They were, as a matter of fact, engaged upon a scheme of study drawn up by the Army authorities and experts at the War Office. The unfortunate point, therefore, about the writer's argument is this, that these noble young subalterns from Eton, whose predilection for Latin verses has prevented us from knocking at the gates of Potsdam were following a course of study arranged by the experts at the War Office.

### THE FALLACY OF THE “ SUBJECT ” BEING THE “ END ” IN EDUCATION

The instruments of education may be roughly classed under two headings : those which develop the so-called “ literary ” or “ humanistic ” faculties, and those which develop the so-called

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"scientific" faculties. For the purposes of our argument the classics need be no more *essential* to the development of a boy's literary or humanistic faculties than bread and butter and roast mutton are *essential* to the development of his physical powers; there are heaps of other things which would do just as well as bread and butter and roast mutton, but we all know that bread and butter and roast mutton are quite rational, sensible things to feed a boy upon, and we therefore continue to include them in the school menu, just as we continue to include the classics as part of his mental diet, but the point is that if you substitute something else for the classics you are not by this means going to produce an infant phenomenon, any more than by feeding a boy upon "Zamtosh" or "Vimmimon" or some other patent food you are going to make him grow to the height of ten feet, though these patent foods may be just as good as bread and butter.

But you cannot by reasoning get rid of these fallacies; there will always be hundreds of thousands of people who most solemnly believe that there is, somewhere, some educational alchemy by which schoolboy nature can be transformed.



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And as the world "*progresses*" this particular fallacy takes a firmer strangle-hold upon the unthinking mob; because if guns can be made to carry further, and aeroplanes to fly faster, the cow can obviously be made to give more milk. Yet we know perfectly well (if we *do* stop to think) that all the inventions of science can make no appreciable addition to the average length of men's lives, or the average amount of milk which the average cow will provide us with.

It is, of course, possible that you might "breed" a specially prolific cow, just as by carefully selecting his progenitors for a sufficient number of generations you might produce an infant who would in time tackle even the scheme of education sketched out for us in the report I am dealing with (and I heartily commend this idea to those scientific professors who have enlisted under Lord Desborough's banner).

But general schemes of reform in education cannot be based upon the Utopian possibility of this breeding process becoming so regular a habit with the English people as to result in any appreciable harvest of infant prodigies in the immediate future.

We must, therefore, if we are going to reform our Public School education after the war, leave

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such things out of account—we must look carefully about us to see what is best to be done.

And before doing even this it is above all necessary to rid our minds of any false ideas we may have with regard to our present schemes of education as compared with those of our neighbours.

### ENGLISH AND FOREIGN STANDARDS OF EDUCATION

One belief (which is so universal that to question it seems almost the act of a lunatic) is, that our standard in the various subjects—Latin, mathematics, etc.—can bear no comparison whatever with that attained in Continental schools—especially the schools of Germany and Switzerland.

With regard to this point it is extremely difficult to get what is called in political economy a “measure of value,” because the language in which the educational subject is taught is a different one in different countries. But I did some time ago happen by chance to accomplish this.

I had a small boy in my school whose father (a Swiss) was the owner of a very large business in his own country; the boy's mother was

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American by birth but had lived a great deal in England, and the boy was sent to me to be prepared for Eton.

When his time came to leave me his English and French were both about equal and were quite good; in Latin and mathematics he was to a good, sound standard, though not near the point reached in either of those subjects by the class of boy who wins an Eton scholarship. He was, in fact, in these subjects just a good, sound boy, such as the ordinary English preparatory school turns out by the dozen every year.

At the last moment, for family reasons, the plan for him was changed, and instead of going to Eton he went to the best "public" (i.e. Government) school in Switzerland.

Here he was placed in the highest class into which, for his age, he was allowed to enter, and in this class he was competing with boys by more than a year his seniors; at the end of his first term he was top of the class, not only in French and English, but also in Latin and mathematics.

If in reply to this you say, "Ah, yes, but you cannot argue from individual instances," my answer is that this is an individual instance from which you most emphatically *can* argue.

Supposing you asserted that the German rifle-

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shooting was as a whole infinitely superior to ours, and then you sent out an ordinarily good marksman from England (not a Bisley prize-winner, but a good average shot), and you found that he beat quite easily the "good average" German marksmen, this would constitute a proof that the assertion with regard to the infinite superiority of German marksmanship was a mistaken one.

Another belief is that in Germany or Switzerland the course of study is quite different to ours *with regard to subjects*, i.e. that our neighbours have discovered that precious alchemy which I before spoke of, by which schoolboy nature can be transformed, and that it is only the "obstinacy," "blindness," "ignorance," "bigotry," etc., of the English Public School master which prevents this same mixture from being used in England.

As a matter of fact the course of study *with regard to subjects* is very much the same in Germany as in England, with this exception (and if any of the letter-writers quoted at the beginning of Lord Desborough's report happen to read my remarks I beg them to note most carefully what the exception is): *The German boy of the same social standing as the boy who in England goes to*

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*the English Public School, does more classics than the English Public School boy.*

Or if you like to put it in another way you may say that more German boys of the social standing in Germany which corresponds to that occupied by the average boy who goes to an English Public School, *more*, I say, of these boys do classics in Germany than they do in England; i.e. if you took the boys of a social standing in Germany parallel to that occupied by the average boy who goes to an English Public School, if, I say, ~~you took~~ all these German boys and added up the hours they devoted to classics you would find that in the aggregate the number of hours thus spent was far greater in Germany than in England.

I can well imagine that if any of the writers of the letters quoted in Lord Desborough's report do reach this point in my remarks they will now throw my pamphlet out of the window and rush off to the nearest police station shouting out: "The man's mad." "How *dare* he tell such wicked stories." "He must be suffering from the drug habit." "Lock him up." Nevertheless, my dear friends, what I am saying is the sober truth, so that when, like Nebuchadnezzar, in your "rage and fury," you heat the furnace

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seven times hotter, in order that we poor fellows the schoolmasters may be cast into it forthwith, all the time the golden image before which you have ordered us to bow down does not in actual fact exist, at all, it is only the hallucination of your disordered senses.

### THE FALLACY OF "PROGRESS" IN EDUCATION

Another fallacy is that there is "progress" in education, in the sense that so many people use the word. To put it as simply as one can, many people believe that you can invent something by which the pupils in a school can be made to learn things or do things better and better as time goes on. But we are never going to invent schemes which will teach people to draw better than Raphael or Titian or Velasquez drew (or the average draughtsman for that matter, to draw better than the average draughtsman did in the times of these artists). We are never going to invent schemes of education which will enable people to reason better than Aristotle reasoned. If we aim at "progress" in these directions we attain in education even unto the scheme suggested by Lord Desborough, just as in "progressive" art we produce the cubist and the futurist and the "paulo-positanticonptionist,"

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with the result that the ordinary, sensible person, when he gazes at the product of this species of "art," simply says, "Dear me, who dyed that dog green?"

### THE FALLACY OF "SIMPLICITY" IN EDUCATION

Another fallacy is that you can make things "easy" in education. This leads people who are teaching small children to try to teach them by means of pictures. Thus, in order to help a ~~little child~~ in the nursery to understand the sentence "the hen lays the egg," you show him a beautiful picture of a hen and also one of an egg; unfortunately, however, you *cannot draw a picture of the word "lays."*

But if a small boy is really so dull that he cannot grasp "hen" and "egg" without looking at a picture, then he will never realize the word "lays" till long after he is married, when it will be too late. The *real* task of the teacher is to leave "hen" and "egg" to take its chance and concentrate his whole brain upon creating in the child's mind the power to receive abstract impressions.

In other words, from the very start you are confronted with *verbs*, and a verb implies an

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abstract process, the realization of which cannot be "simplified." Thus it is only through the drudgery of concentration from the very beginning that you can hope to accomplish anything really worth doing in education.

I have been teaching (or, if you like, trying to teach) for over a quarter of a century. I have taught advanced natives in India who could learn a whole play of Shakespeare by heart, and all the notes upon the play that were ever written, and thus answer the stiffest examination questions on the play with ease, though they never understood or tried to understand one single word about it from beginning to end.

I have taught sixth-form Public School boys, fourth-form boys, "special" boys who were being run for History Scholarships, etc., but by far the most fascinating and most difficult thing I have ever tried to do in teaching is what I am doing every morning of my life in term-time now, and that is to take the "babies," i.e. the little boys who come to me straight from the nursery, and to try to get the same sort of concrete impression of an *abstract* term or process imprinted upon their mind, as their mind does actually receive of a concrete expression. To put it as simply as I can, I strive to conduct my



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operations upon the child's mind in such a way that when I say such words as "verb," "adjective," "mood," or such a sentence as "the bird *laid* the egg which *lay* in the nest," these words, "verb," "adjective," "lay," etc., should convey just such an instant impression to the child's mind as the words "cake," "elephant," "chocolate" convey to it.

To some children this is as easy as falling off a chair, to others it is extraordinarily difficult, and very likely the boys who find it most difficult ~~are going to~~ be the best boys in the end.

And may I be allowed to say this? You can do what I describe just exactly three times as quickly through the medium of Latin plus English as through the medium of English alone. And that is partly why we old fossils side with Lord Cromer instead of with Colonel Shirley, and stick to our Latin as an instrument of education.

### THE ATTACK UPON ETON

It does not, however, in the least follow from anything I have said that the Public Schools may not be in the most urgent need of reform. All one wishes to prevent is that they should be "reformed" by the sort of educationists who

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enact such diverting little comedies as the one set forth in this report.

And with regard to the prime object of their attack—their old school—their supposed loyalty to the establishment prompts them to pelt with the most venomous abuse the men who are in charge of it, yet when we come to examine the grounds upon which their accusations are based we find (as I have conclusively shown) that they arise from nothing else but a blind, wilful, and dogged ignorance of the most elementary principles connected with the education of boys up to the age of eighteen or nineteen years.

I have not put these remarks on paper because I felt that Eton was in any need of defence from such as I am—I was not myself at school at Eton, and no Eton master knows that I am writing this pamphlet. My connexion with the school is due to the fact that over the space of more than twenty years I have sent a large number of boys to Eton from the preparatory school which I control. I know what *splendid* services the Eton masters have rendered to these boys, in intellectual training, as well as in character training, and when I came across in this report all this odiously vulgar abuse of the Eton staff, abuse extended to the whole body of

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Public School masters, of which I, before entering upon preparatory school work, was a member—when I happened by chance to come across all this, I thought it would be interesting purely for my own satisfaction to see if I could not remind these traducers of my profession that there was one old “antediluvian,” at any rate, hobbling about with a bit of a kick still left in him.

But if it were a question of my holding a brief for Eton education, I should be inclined to quote another remark of the great doctor's who, when told that Mrs. Montague “trembled for Shakespeare,” said to Sir Joshua, “When Shakespeare has got Mrs. Montague for his defender he is in a poor state indeed.”

Eton, like Shakespeare, is one of our great national institutions, and it will be an evil day for this country if ever this great school really stands in need of any defence from such a pen as mine.

I have reason, however, to believe that (judging from the way my book on Public Schools was received) these remarks of mine may be read by a certain number of Public School masters—and I wish to point out to them that a grave danger at the present moment does lie in the fact that

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men like Lord Desborough are unconsciously playing directly into the hands of such men as Lord Haldane.

### GERMAN IDEALS DESTRUCTIVE TO ENGLISH EDUCATION

The tendency of Lord Haldane's mind irresistibly urges him towards Germany, his Alma Mater. He still struggles after the ideal of unification in education which, if realized or even partially realized in this country, is bound to destroy just that very character training given in our Public Schools which Lord Desborough believes in.

There is, I am certain, a very grave danger of this. What people of Lord Haldane's way of thinking would desire is that schoolmasters engaged in higher education should be converted into Government officials (as they are in Germany) and that the Public Schools should be "unified" and converted into a Government department.

But a Government official will never train individual character in England any more than he does in Germany; the whole atmosphere in which he lives, the irresistible force of every circumstance connected with his daily round, creates a mighty engine to destroy individual

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effort and convert the human being into the machine. The training of any individual boy's character depends on the trainer having a free hand to do from day to day a hundred and one individual actions which could never receive the sanction, or even the countenance, of a Government department.

It is an odd circumstance, therefore, that just at the moment when the triumph of bureaucratic despotism has enslaved the entire German people and robbed them of every vestige of power to express their individuality—if, indeed, they still retain any modicum of that quality worthy of the name—it is curious, I say, that just at this moment when this triumph of the bureaucratic ideal has brought upon a mighty people the biggest moral disaster that has ever happened to any nation in the history of the world, we in England should be receiving with open arms proposals to adopt those very same plans with regard to our education which have brought Germany to complete moral ruin. For whatever the final issue of the war, that Germany is ruined morally there can be no possible doubt.

There may be some who have followed my argument sufficiently closely up to this point to be able to cry out, "Ha ha, my friend, you

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have now delivered yourself over unto our teeth. You have been telling us what a splendid scheme of education the Navy scheme is, and you next go on to tell us that if the Public Schools are converted into a Government department, and Public School masters are transformed into Government officials, that will be the ruin of Public School education, while all the time you forget that the Navy scheme of education is in itself, as it were, a Government department, and the teachers employed under it are most distinctly Government officials."

I appear to have argued myself into a cul-de-sac, and the fact that I have not done so—which I shall demonstrate in a moment—only shows what an extremely complicated, difficult, many-sided problem the question of reform in education presents.

It is perfectly true that the masters at Osborne and Dartmouth are Government officials. But they have received their training at Public, or preparatory, schools, they have been nurtured in that atmosphere of individualism, and individual initiative, which would no longer be in existence a generation or two after the Public Schools had been "Germanized" in the way I describe. And not only this, the Naval

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authorities who created Osborne and Dartmouth are not of the "official" type, but come of the fighting breed—i.e. Osborne and Dartmouth are not the creation of an official department, but the continuation of the old methods in use upon the *Britannia*, methods which existed long before the blighting curse of ultra-bureaucratic officialism had begun to brood over the peoples of Europe. These old *Britannia* methods, therefore, do not emanate from a Government department at all, but from the mind of "the man behind the gun."

I know that there are a great many people who believe that you can convert our Public Schools into a Government department and at the same time retain the individualistic spirit necessary for character training; in other words, that you can remove the *cause* by which certain results are obtained and at the same time keep the results.

### I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU CAN DO THIS

When I first read Schopenhauer's "Studies in Pessimism" and was told by some one who was in a position to judge that this book had had an enormous influence in Germany, I said to my informant, "If once a nation, as a whole, argues itself into the belief that its religion is no longer

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to be the basis of conduct, then that which we call 'honour' amongst men, or 'chastity' amongst women, is very soon going to disappear." I have said this so many hundreds of times in the last twenty years that my family and relations cry out in despair when they hear the opening words of what a charming young lady of my acquaintance once called a "slightly priggish maxim," but I never expected in my own lifetime to see the truth of this "slightly priggish maxim" demonstrated to the world as it has been since the war broke out. For its truth has most certainly been demonstrated by Germany as a nation in a very astounding way.

It is most significant therefore in this connexion that though I have read the report three or four times, I cannot find one single word in it about religious teaching, and from the point of view of the writers and speakers whose opinions are here collected, religious teaching must necessarily be the most "*useless*" thing of all. Nay, to those gentlemen of the Chamber of Commerce to whom Mr. Samuel refers, it might even prove an obstacle to the raking together of their millions. And yet there are many of us who believe that one of the chief reasons why we have been able to stand up against the Germans in this war,



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though they have been straining every nerve for forty or fifty years to be ready to crush us when the moment came, whilst we, beyond the fact that we happened to keep our Navy in working order, have taken no precautions whatever against them—many of us, I say, believe that the main reason why we have managed to accomplish this incredible thing is because we still do attach more importance to honour, and chastity, and religion, and things of that kind, than we do to the political economy of Mr. Samuel, or the mathematics of Sir Ronald Ross, or even to the five modern languages of the ubiquitous washer-women.

### THE INDICTMENT AND THE ANSWER

This is really the basis of the charge brought in the report against the Public Schools—viz. their crime, according to the report, is that they will persist in fiddling about with these worn-out things, religion, honour, and so on, and as a boy's time is limited, and you cannot possibly do everything, they consequently neglect the more important things. The gibes in the report against the "clergyman head master" all come from this feeling.

All I say to the profession to which I am so

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intensely proud to belong, the profession which I believe to be the very highest and noblest a man can work in next to that of the soldier and the sailor, the men who fight for their country and so make my own profession possible—all I say to the Public School masters is, "Stick to your guns; if necessary go down with the ship, but still continue to turn out amiable and excellent gentlemen like Lord Desborough, whose only fault, after all, is that he has been rash enough to meddle with an extremely intricate subject about which he knows nothing whatever. Do not try to turn out Lord Haldanes, but let them go, as he did, to Germany for their education. For I think I have plainly shown that you will never satisfy all the gentlemen of the report at the same time. If you succeed in pacifying Mr. Samuel you will still have the knight of the washerwomen to cope with."

When I say my own profession is the "very highest" a man can work in I do not, of course, pretend to compare it with that of the clergyman. For the man who has the care of the religion of a country is necessarily the most important man of all. And if this war has not proved that statement to be true, then, as Shakespeare says, "You may spit upon me and call me horse."

Mr. Alington was a boy at Marlborough when I

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was a master there. I have watched his career for more than twenty years. I may be wrong, but I doubt whether he will attempt to establish the scheme of education advocated by Lord Desborough. In other words, I do not believe he is a man who will play to the gallery.

For, as a matter of fact, the Public Schools were never in a stronger position than they are now, and I believe that those Labour members, who so nobly came forward and said, "We are going to help to win this war though we have to give up many beliefs that were dear to us," would agree with a good deal that I am now saying.

### **THE "GERMANIZATION" OF ENGLISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Yet there are a certain number of Public School masters in this country anxious thus to "Germanize" our English Public Schools, because thereby the dignity of their own position would, in their opinion, be enhanced by their becoming Government officials as they are in Germany. And nobody is working harder in their behalf than Lord Desborough at the present moment.

Whether this "Germanization" of our Public Schools will come about is a difficult thing to

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prophecy; one of the obstacles in the way of it is no doubt that supreme contempt for schoolmasters and all their works displayed in the letters of the report and shared by the vast majority of the nation.

This contempt for schoolmasters is bred in the very bones of the nation and shared by all classes alike. For just as Lord Desborough's band of parents so eagerly grasp the hand he holds out to them, not so much because they want reform, but because they see the chance of spitting in public upon their old tutors (as they do with such hearty zest in this report), so the village worthies, though they indeed refrain from the blatant vulgarities of their "betters," will nevertheless sooner elect any labouring man upon their Parish Council than the village schoolmaster.

And this inherent scorn of the purveyors of education is, I believe, in many ways a most excellent and salutary thing.

Theories which emanate from the professorial chair will never influence the great mass of the British nation, who would far sooner go to prison than be made to think.

"If there had been no Rousseau," said Napoleon, "there would have been no French Revolution," and this, as Lecky points out, is perfectly

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true, in the sense that certain a priori theories of Rousseau's were adopted as a gospel by the thinking part of the French nation.

And in precisely the same way the theories of Schopenhauer, Bernhardt, Nietzsche, and the rest of them have done more than anything else to drive Germany over the abyss. If the thinking part of a nation adopts professorial a priori theories as a kind of gospel, sooner or later the catastrophe is bound to ensue.

But there is no thinking part of the nation in England, i.e. we don't think collectively. If we did we should never have pulled through this war in the way we have.

We, as a nation, think in exactly the same way as the gentlemen of the report under notice think, viz. each man for himself on the *scabies extremum occupet* principle, nay, many of us cultivate the protean power exhibited by Lord Desborough himself, of thinking in two contradictory directions at the same moment.

This on the whole is a good thing, as, though it makes sensible reform rather more difficult, it is a great obstacle in the way of hasty and destructive "reform" begotten of crass ignorance, sweeping all before it; because abysmal though our ignorance may be it always lacks cohesion.

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### THE "COMMON ENTRANCE" EXAMINATION TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"The wild and savage blows at the English Public School system aimed by the letter-writers of the report are not nearly so great a danger as the more insidious efforts of that type of English Public School master who wants to be, even as his German brother, a Government official. He has not made much headway at present, but he has begun by working, as it were, beneath the foundation of the structure, and has already accomplished something towards this ideal of unification (and the consequent destruction of individualism and initiative which it entails) by the establishment of what is called "the common entrance examination to the Public Schools."

The examination itself is scarcely of a character which would be approved by experts in Germany, it is indeed "a very fearful sort of wild fowl." It consists of no less than seventeen (or it may be eighteen) papers set to little boys of very ordinary ability, and of not more than twelve or thirteen years of age, raced through at lightning speed, and without any help from dictionaries. The latter portions of these papers are practically up to scholarship standard, and the examination is

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made by most Public Schools strictly competitive i.e. they bring out their result in order of merit (Eton, I may say, does *not* do this.)

Thus the "Germanizers" have so far succeeded in that they have reintroduced by means of this elaborate examination that element of cut-throat competition amongst little boys which forces all the abominable methods of cram and drive and "bludgeoning" upon their teachers; methods which the Naval authorities, after a glorious and triumphant struggle, have at last succeeded in banishing from the atmosphere that used to surround the unfortunate children who were being *crammed up* for the Navy.

To my mind the pride and joy which a certain number of preparatory school masters (and also a certain number of Public School head masters) take in this their German bantling is a very pathetic thing to contemplate. I showed a set of these examination papers not long ago to a Swiss professor, and when he realized that they were intended for children of average (or below the average) ability, and of the tender age of twelve or thirteen years, he chuckled with delight and exclaimed: "Voilà quelque chose de bizarre."

When you ask the supporters of this extraordinary examination whether they really believe

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It is a good thing to reintroduce the nightmare of cramming, etc. etc., their method of defence is to "move you down," so to speak, into the "bee in the bonnet" class. "My dear fellow," they say, "you are really making a great fuss over a very small matter; these things get on your nerves," etc. etc.

But is it a small matter *to them*? They know well enough in their hearts that this, their darling German baby, with its "schedule D—form 4," and all the rest of it, is almost more precious to them than life itself; that the examination is a farce, that the placing of boys, through its means, grows more fearful and wonderful every year is of no particular consequence. What really matters is that they have at last introduced into our higher education something which may become the foundation-stone upon which the huge German colossus of officialism may some day in England be built up. And very likely they have.

It is, indeed, a noble piece of work when viewed in the light of the results of this war. There is, however, one rift in the cloud—Winchester has already discarded this preposterous examination, and though their head master, after reading this, may very likely adopt it again on



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the "sell for you" principle, he would probably take the step in contradiction to the wishes of his staff. \*

### WHERE GERMANY EXCELS

I have tried to show that there is no real need for us to borrow from Germany, and nothing seems to me to afford a better proof than this examination of the certainty that, if we do begin to borrow from Germany, we are bound to borrow from her only those things which have destroyed her. \*

Because we in England perforce *cannot* at present borrow from Germany that in which she unquestionably excels.

The element of *thoroughness* in German education arises chiefly from the fact that the nation, as a whole, believes in, understands, and is familiar with the great principles which underlie all education.

In England this knowledge is extremely rare. If here and there in England an odd parent or two does take an interest in his or her child's education *sufficiently real* to give solid time and thought and *work* to the matter in hand, so that the parent not only first gets a grip of the vital principles that underlie the schoolmaster's efforts,

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far also finds time to help the schoolmaster to build upon those principles—if, I say, you do, in very truth, come across such parents, they are regarded in this country not so much as being eccentric, but rather as having cultivated a most interesting and peculiar hobby.

It is as if you were to say of a man that he played upon the sackbut, or that his wife kept a tame zebra. So that it is just as difficult for us to borrow Germany's education as it is for Germany to borrow our cricket.

Many parents in England are enormously interested in their children's education in the sense that they are perfectly crazy to get it *all* done by the paid man or woman to whom they entrust the child.

But this *cannot* be. The parents *must* do their part; they may be as rich as Cræsus, but if they do not create in the boy's home the atmosphere in which the intellectual side of a child's nature can develop, nay, if they do not show by overt acts on their own part that they are "out for education," their boy is bound to lose enormously in comparison with the boy whose parents do these things.

Nothing could afford a better proof that a vast number of parents care for none of these things

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than the letters which Lord Desborough has collected, full as they are of astonishing ignorance of the subject they are dealing with, and a bitter vulgar abuse of the men to whom the writers entrust their boys, abuse based, as I have shown, upon fallacies which ninety-nine German parents out of a hundred would see through in five minutes.

### CO-OPERATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOL MASTERS

And a change in these conditions will never be brought about by Government departments, but it most certainly can be brought about by individual effort.

Over twenty years ago I began by preaching this gospel of co-operation to the parents who sent their boys to me; as time went on the parents who came to practise it told others what a difference it made, and how well their ordinary, average boy did at the Public School as consequence. The boys themselves also were thus brought to look upon their masters not as a contemptible lot of miserable old fossils who should be cobbler's-waxed to their chairs on every possible occasion, but as ordinary individuals who ate and smoked and drank much in the

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the manner as their own fathers did, and who were moreover, trying to do their pupils some good; the consequence is that there are now collected round me a body of parents who really do understand what one is aiming at and are, therefore, able to help, and moreover *do* help enormously. .

And if ever there comes to inspect my establishment a prospective parent of the type which Lord Desborough has enlisted under his banner, the sort of man who, with his back to the fire and his hands beneath his coat-tails, opens his attack with "Now, you know, you schoolmasters," I lure that man on till he has sufficiently committed himself, and I then ladle out to him a few spoonfuls of the mixture here provided.

The written word is a feeble and colourless thing, but the spoken word, if delivered with a sufficient suddenness and rapidity of utterance, and so manipulated that the sting lies in the end of the lash, is a far more effective weapon.

I can recall more than one instance in which gentlemen who introduced their "washerwomen of the southern hemisphere" into my academy have discovered, to their surprise, that they have brought their wares to the wrong market.

And yet, more than once, they have sent their

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boys to me; the mystery is explained by the fact that they invariably bring their wives with them. The intense delight that several of these poor women have shown in the sudden and unexpected discomfiture of the washerwomen is a spectacle that would move a heart of stone.

Ah, those wives—poor darlings! How often have they heard of these precious washerwomen; how often have they had to listen to stories of the “rottenness” of the teaching at the Public School their husbands attended, and the “feeble guilelessness” of the tutors.

And yet, never having been to a Public School themselves, sometimes, in the still watches of the night the suspicion crosses their mind that their Percy or their Edwin, devoted as they are to him, may possibly not be unquestionably in the right when he attributes failure to have gained an education entirely to which attempted to provide it.

I remember after one of these bouts when the prospective “father,” with the sickly and uncertain smile of a boxer who has suddenly received an “upper cut,” exclaimed, “Well, anyhow, I was a pretty good ass when I left Eton,” his wife in the sweetest tones imaginable replied, “Yes, darling, and so you are now, but heaven knows

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what you might have been if you had never gone there," and she added that, after all, their main object in coming to see me was to prevent the son growing up as the father.

I am bound to say that the good man thoroughly agreed.

### THE REAL BUSINESS OF EDUCATION

People laugh and jeer at schoolmasters because they are always hammering along in the same old, narrow, stereotyped groove, but I hope I have shown that this is exactly what the schoolmaster ought to do. The schoolmaster *qua* schoolmaster is (or ought to be) a narrow man, doing a narrow, rigid thing, and *real* thinkers when they give their minds to education see this in a moment. Charles Lamb, in his essay upon "The Old and New Schoolmaster," answers Lord Desborough completely.

What a splendid essay, when one considers that Lamb was not concerned with education as his life work. "Peace be to the souls of those old pedagogues," says he, "who went to their Greek grammar as to a sport."

Noble words. That is the *real* spirit of education. The *real* schoolmaster feels just as much excitement and pride and joy in hammering some

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utterly "useless" fact about the accusative and infinitive into a little boy's head as the boy himself feels in finding a rare bird's nest.

That is the spirit, and in order to acquire it the schoolmaster must so educate himself that he is just as much excited over the accusative and infinitive as the boy is over the bird's nest. If you want to understand this spirit, read the "Letters of a Housemaster," which tell you more about education than a whole library of theoretical books:

### "THE CONFERENCE HABIT"

Why? why? oh, why? I keep on asking myself over and over again with passionate insistence, Why *do* schoolmasters who are doing such first-rate work in their schools insist on congregating together at every opportunity and "conferencing" themselves into a condition of mind in which they think it a fine thing for education to proclaim to the world that they are not the thorough, rigid, narrow, "continuous" folk they really are (and if they were not they would soon empty their schools), but rollicking, up-to-date, devil-may-care fellows who will "modernize" any mortal thing you please for "tuppence," and introduce a whole batch of

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fresh subjects "any time, don't you know," thus destroying continuity and rigidity and thoroughness which are the backbone of education? It does not pay, I assure you, and if it were tried at Eton, Lord Desborough and his friends would only say, "Look at these monkish fellows, they have made a worse mess of it than ever."

Scholastic conferences would be splendid things if they followed the example of the commercial conferences and did something practical. What does the Chamber of Commerce do when it meets? It tries to drive a better bargain with the Public Schools, and "sweat" political economy out of them quite regardless of the claims of Sir Douglas Haig for anything that he may want (see Report, p. 40). The Chamber of Commerce knows very well, and nobody knows it better than Mr. Samuel himself, that it gets the Public School boy for about three or four hundred a year (Mr. Samuel mentions the price in his speech—I forget exactly what it was). It sends this boy out to the ends of the earth where the salary is worth about a third of what it is in England, and this boy transacts business for the Chamber of Commerce, in the course of which if he (the boy) chose to take a bribe of £50,000 he could get it and retire for life. (Mr. Samuel knows I am



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telling the exact truth—I know all about this.) The Chamber of Commerce knows that the Public School boy won't take the money, and, considering the wage it pays, the Chamber of Commerce is doing a precious good business, but it wants more, and if you gave it more it would ask for more again.

But the scholastic conference, instead of saying to the commercial conference, "We know all about you, go away," is inclined to apologize to the commercial conference, or even to allow the Public Schools to be sweated.

But if schoolmasters do meet in conference they ought to stand up boldly and say to the world, "Don't you interfere with our job," instead of playing to the gallery and making out that they wish to modernize everybody and everything.

And if we try to get to the actual root of the matter, may we not very likely discover that the commercial conference, just as the educational conference, is apt to argue itself into a condition of mind in which it thinks it is doing one thing while it is really doing another.

In trying to foist their political economy on to the Public School the Chamber of Commerce had no doubt argued itself into a state of mind in

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which it believed it was doing a practical thing for itself; but was this the case? Because if the old fogys and antediluvians substitute political economy for the worn-out rusty, monkish weapons of education which they persist in using, such as religion, the principles of honour, the humanities, and so on, then the Public School boy is very likely going to take that bribe I was talking about just now.

"Ah," says Mr. Samuel, "but we don't want you to *substitute* political economy for all these things, but to *add* it to them." And there is the second fallacy, viz. that each man's subject or body of men's subject has a claim, just because it happens to be of importance to him or them.

If you point this out to any *individual* of the Chamber of Commerce he will see it at once, but when the members all get together and begin, as the little boys say, to "jaw," they feel in honour bound, as it were, to prove to themselves and to the world that they have not been wasting their time, and they, therefore, pass some such resolution as the one under discussion.

I am, no doubt, utterly wrong-headed in this matter, but it always seems to me that these conferences, whether of men of commerce or of head masters, destroy that sense of mystery which

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ought to surround the chief men, the men at the very top, in any department or division of our national affairs. The Navy and Army seem to me to understand this. When there is some outcry raised about some great technical change which ought to be carried out in the Navy, does Sir John Jellicoe tell the whole world (including the Germans) exactly why he is going to do (or is not going to do) what they suggest ?

I believe if the head masters said, "We are going to meet to discuss certain matters of national importance with regard to education, but they are far too technical for the public to understand, and we shall, therefore, allow no report to be published of our deliberations," by pursuing this policy they would enormously strengthen their position.

If I had to choose a motto for a head masters' conference it would be: "Neither do we tell you by what authority we do these things."

Because this is the right and the true spirit in every art. The public is like the little boy who is brought up to ask intelligent (i.e. harassing) questions. The boy's object is not nearly so much to receive instruction as to prove himself one too many for those who set themselves up as the fountain heads of knowledge, and therefore the

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public, if ever it tries to take a hand in the experts' game, is bound to do mischief.

Whistler, in the best short essay upon art that was ever written, and I say this without fear of contradiction—Whistler points out in his "Ten o'clock" that the one great fundamental necessity for the growth and development of true art in any country is that the masses, the unthinking, ignorant mob, *must* leave the artists alone and not interfere with them. If they do interfere you get—what we did indeed attain unto through the efforts of Ruskin to popularize art—the plush bracket, and the bulrush traced by the tremulous hand of the faded spinster upon the surface of the drawing-room looking-glass.

It is the same everywhere. People who know nothing about education must not be allowed to express an opinion upon it. I notice that Lord Desborough has succeeded in enlisting that magnificent sailor, Sir John Jellicoe, under his banner. And I have no doubt that Sir John Jellicoe, when the lessons learnt through this war come to be engrafted into our Navy system will, upon the same principle, be the first to call in the Archbishop of Canterbury to tell him what he really ought to do with regard to the improvement of our Dreadnought boilers.

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I confess I was simply delighted when I saw Sir John Jellicoe's name. I have sent many boys into the Navy from my preparatory school, and they constantly come back to see me. They are all just like that. "Be on a committee to reform education? Of course I will. Do you think I funk any rotten old committee that was ever invented? I'd sit on a committee to revise the Athanasian creed for twopence."

A man whose life is "in jeopardy every hour" isn't going to funk some rotten old committee.

Sir John Jellicoe's attitude in this matter reminds me of the old chestnut about the preacher who was describing the day of judgment. After expatiating upon the condition of those who stood upon the right hand, he glared round upon the congregation and boomed out over and over again, "But, where are the goats? Where are the goats? Where are the goats?" till at last a sailor in the congregation, anxious to get home to his dinner, shouted back, "I don't mind bein' a goat, governor, if you can't get on."

So it is in this case. Our greatest admiral, when called upon to volunteer in a cause which involves the overwhelming risk of a lingering and painful death to his reputation as an educationist, does not hesitate for a moment.

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It is, of course, the *smart thing* to "crab" Eton education just as you would be very *démodé*, I assure you, if you did not, when providing your guests with a dinner at the most select restaurant in London, warn them before they sat down that there would be nothing upon the menu fit to eat: you would then call the head waiter and tell him that if he dared, after dinner, to bring you any more of the Louis the Eleventh brandy you would break his head. The brandy had never been any good, you would tell your guests, since the massacre of St. Bartholomew, when your great-great-great-great-grandfather, having broken bounds and popped across from Eton to see what was going on, had staved in all the remaining casks of the "real stuff," which, by the by, *his great-grandfather* always used to drink in company with any of the Capets whom he thought worthy of an invitation to dinner. But the reformers seem to me to have forgotten that, just at this moment, to do the smart thing, *is to be démodé*. To be in the fashion just now we must drop our materialism (or hide it as best we can), and, adapting our principles to our war-economy attire, stand up for all those threadbare, worn-out "antediluvian" standards in education which our ancestors

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used to believe in, such as religion (not mentioned in the report), honour, the humanities, etc. etc., as against that "brutal materialism" which the report tells us is of no particular consequence in a school, provided its pupils are acquiring something of *practical value*.

I have always loathed and abominated materialism in education, and if anything has ever witnessed to its failure it is this war. It is bad in itself, and what is more it does not pay. We have all worshipped at the shrine of Germany for the last fifty years because we thought it would pay. But for goodness' sake let us scrap it now, at any rate for a bit, till we have forgotten this lesson, when, I suppose, we shall begin to prepare ourselves for another.

And if, in the meantime, amongst those who understand the elements of education it comes to a discussion of "reform" in the education now provided at Eton, may I personally be allowed to say this: I know nothing whatever of the details of the educational scheme in use at Eton beyond the fact that it is so extraordinarily complicated that no one who has not been working under it for a considerable time can possibly understand it, and it is quite certain that none of the boys themselves, since they are not behind

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the scenes and working the scheme, can understand it or criticize it for one single moment.

I speak with absolute seriousness when I say that this, to my mind, is an inimitable merit. For, since no one can possibly understand the scheme except the Eton masters themselves, this makes it impossible for any sensible outsider to criticize it, for no one except the sort of folk whom Lord Desborough has collected round him will attempt to criticize the working of any scheme till they have first grasped its details.

The men, therefore, who have built up the Eton scheme have, in my opinion, displayed true genius. They have followed the great and abiding principle laid down by Whistler that in any art (and the dictum applies just as much to the art of education as to that of painting)—in any art the first thing is to prevent, if possible, the “many-headed” from putting their fingers in the pie.

But that the Eton scheme is a very excellent one indeed is proved by results, and I make this statement as one who is really in a position to judge. I have sent many boys to the school and they have been handled far, far better than the boys themselves, or their parents, can ever for one single instant realize or imagine. That



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absence of push and drive and *cram* which, in my opinion, distinguishes Eton, and which has no doubt led hundreds of thousands of ignorant people to say, "Of course they are awfully 'slack' over the education at Eton"—the absence of this pushing and forcing of boys at just the critical age of puberty, accounts, in my opinion, more than anything else for the extraordinary number of Eton boys who do well in after life. If, as compared with other leading Public Schools, there are a large number of Eton boys who do not make a "success" of their careers afterwards, in the sense that they do not push their way to the front, that may be partly due to the fact that Eton has not, so far, followed the example of those many Public Schools which strive with all their might and main to skim the cream off the preparatory schools while they refuse to take the milk. I say, without fear of contradiction, that in following their policy of taking the material which is offered to them, and struggling bravely and sympathetically, as Eton always does, with the difficult, slow-developing boy, the authorities are choosing by far the nobler and better part, and they have their reward in that feeling of deep affection which so many of these ordinary or "backward" (i.e. slow-

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developing) boys retain for their old school through life. Such boys are *not* the writers of the letters Lord Desborough has collected.

### THE THUMBSCREW HEAD MASTER

The other policy of perpetually screwing up standards to a height far above the normal concert pitch, and by means of rigid superannuation rules and so on harrying out of the place boys who ought to be the chief care of the schoolmaster, i.e. the boys from whom you get no *immediate* return in the shape of school honours and medals, nothing, that is, *that you can put in the shop window*—the policy, I say, of driving out these boys who really present by far the most important and interesting problem to the true teacher; this devil-take-the-hindmost plan of operation appeals to many schoolmasters and to a still larger number of parents who happen to have forward boys. I detest it myself. It does *not* rid the Public School of the “slacker.” The real slacker is the boy of good ability who uses it to reduce to a science the practice of just, and only just, doing the required minimum. These “thumbscrew” plans only touch the slow-developing boy and they are abominably unjust towards him.

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But they do infinitely greater harm to the precocious forward boy, who, as he watches the backward boy (who is very likely going to be just as good at thirty as the forward boy) harried from pillar to post and eventually driven forth with ignominy, he (the forward boy) comes to believe that he himself is "some great one," and his perspective of life is deranged at the outset. He is bred up in an atmosphere of injustice and force and intolerance, and, above all, of perpetual drive, drive, drive. Thus he goes out into the world having lost, as we say of a bowler, his "natural spin," while at the same time he is a complete stranger to that spirit of tolerance which is so essential to success in life, and which is, in my opinion, a very marked characteristic of the Eton boy.

There is a certain Public School, a magnificent school, which might at the present moment take a leaf out of Eton's book with regard to this matter. This school was founded for men of a certain profession; owing to the exigencies of their profession (which is abominably paid) these men, who are always on the move, stand at a great disadvantage in getting education for their children during that important period before these children are sent to me. Their sons are

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consequently often a bit behind. But the school which was founded for these boys is now screwing up the standard to such a pitch as to prevent a great many of these particular boys going there. This is true, and the authorities at the school know that what I say is true, so that it is no use blustering when I state the fact.

'Drive, push, a stereotyped uniformity forced by "strafting" methods upon our Public School boys *from without*, instead of the creation of an atmosphere in which their intellectual and moral qualities acquire their strength *from within*, that is what one fears may be the outcome of all this talk about "reform."

### THE PRE-NATAL GOOSE-STEP

For years before this war I believed that this passion for uniformity induced by force from without would bring ruin upon Germany, and I stated this in the book I wrote upon education some years ago. As I used to gaze, before this war, upon those photographs in our monthly magazines of acres and acres of German "flappers," stretching far, far beyond the limits vouchsafed to our human vision, *all* of these wretched maidens dressed exactly alike, *all* of them standing at exactly the same distance from

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each other, *all* of them tilting their noses in exactly the same direction, *all* of them contorting a certain portion of their anatomy to exactly that particular angle of gracelessness which some German professor after years of patient study had decided was the one most likely to promote the fecundity of the fatherland, I always felt that in thus creating a condition of things in which the future offspring of these poor girls would in their pre-natal existence be already doing the goose-step, you were bound to dry up at its very source the fountain from which initiative alone can spring.

It is this "uniformity" in education which the "scientist" is out for after the war. But for Heaven's sake, whatever else we do, do not let us devise some scheme which deprives our English boys of their "natural spin," for it was just this "natural spin" which enabled Nelson to put his blind eye to the telescope, and which in this war has given our English boys the mastery in the air.

### WHAT IS SCIENCE ?

If, however, it comes to the question of a boy's starting his science at the Public School before the age of eighteen, there are many very able

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scientists who hold that, since mathematics is the first step towards the study of any branch of science, a boy who is to devote himself to science had better stick to his mathematics till he leaves the Public School and give, while he is there, all the time he possibly can to this part of his education. For while education (as I have before pointed out) must be carried on upon rigid narrow lines, science is, I understand, not a narrow thing, but something so broad that the world in which we live is a mere negligible atom as compared with it. A well-known German work which deals with "Science" as a whole, divides it under 139 headings, which average 78 branches apiece. Probably the writer is well within the mark, and this may be the reason why the Germans do not believe in boys doing very much "science" before they are eighteen. They have not that easy confidence of the gentlemen of the report. Education, indeed, is altogether a most perplexing matter; some people, as we see by Lord Desborough's report, believe it is one thing and some another, but whatever it is, I am certain that the great Fouillée, the greatest writer upon education of our time, was absolutely right when he told us what education was *not*. "Education," he said, "is *not* the acquisition of information."

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In this war two different schemes of education have been brought face to face—the “material” and the “moral.” I have tried to show that our scheme (i.e. the “moral” scheme) does *not* preclude quite a sound standard in education *qua* education as apart from character training altogether. But whether I have proved my point or not, do not let us lose sight of what Public Schools education really is, and why it has accomplished what it has accomplished for us in this war.

Let it be clearly understood then, once and for all, that

### THE BASIS OF BRITISH PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION IS RELIGION AND MORALS

And you cannot inculcate these things into the minds of young folk through the medium of mathematics and science. You cannot, in other words, say *be good because twice two is four*; this was the wonderful modern gospel of such admirable old gentlemen as Huxley, Tyndall, and

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Herbert Spencer, but the axiom is a somewhat tricky one for those to steer by who are more or less in charge, so to speak, of the country's morals; since our Bernard Shaws, i.e. the "corner men" in our motley minstrel troupe of national philosophy, can always demonstrate just as satisfactorily, from dear, good John Bull's point of view, that "twice two is six."

This does not mean that mathematics and science are not essential and necessary, but you must use different instruments in education altogether to mathematics and science if you wish to maintain the output of that sort of product of the Public School which has vindicated its "right to live" by what it has done in the war.

If you want to understand the inseparable connexion between religion and morals on the one side and the humanities on the other, read a book which has just come out—Livingstone's, "Defence of Classical Education" (Macmillan).

Not a single newspaper criticism of this book that I have come across has questioned the main bases of its arguments. (See Note *a*, p. 114.)

And this "moral" basis of education in England is not the possession merely of the so-called "Public Schools." All schools, practically, run



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by individual or corporate enterprise (as apart from the State), aim at the solidification of this "moral" base, as the foundation upon which they build. And the State schools do their best to work on the same lines.

And from the moral instinct thus produced emanates the boy-scout movement, which solidifies the same spirit in the county schools.

The great fallacy is that you can cut through the root from which this instinct springs, and at the same time go on producing from a purely materialistic scheme of education (i.e. a scheme based solely on mathematics, science, modern languages, and the "utilities") the type of boy who has carried us through this war.

The spirit of the private soldier exhibited throughout the war is just as much the result of this scheme of education as is the spirit of the subaltern from the Public School, because the spirit which has imbued the private soldier lies deep down in the moral instincts of the race to which he belongs, and these same moral instincts are the result of a continuous scheme of education reaching right back through the centuries, and producing a type which the private soldier could instinctively trust and look up to. Without that feeling of trust we could have done

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nothing against the "blood and iron" of the Germans.

This spirit of trust, of freedom, of independence is, as we know, the eternal enemy of bureaucracy, which can never reign supreme in this country, as it does in Germany, till this spirit of "moral individualism" is destroyed, and that is why the type of mind represented by such men as Lord Haldane is always busy slashing at the root of the "moralities" in education and appealing to the materialistic spirit.

When the war is over we shall be busy with educational reform, and our business men, our captains of industry, will have to throw their weight into the scale on one side or the other. On my bended knees, *lacrimis obortis*, I beseech and implore these men to listen to what such experts as Professor Sadler have to say before they surrender themselves to the cunning rhetoric of Lord Haldane.

• Professor Sadler has devoted years to the study of German methods, while Lord Haldane was translating Schopenhauer, or superintending the British Army, or writing a life of Adam Smith. What does Lord Haldane know of education compared with such men, as Professor Sadler? In the game of "general post" amongst the

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higher Government offices, Lord Haldane, like other politicians, may have perched for a time upon an education branch, but I have read some of the speeches Lord Haldane has delivered since he has been starring the provinces as an education reformer, and his attitude towards the spirit of English education reminds me of the lines which a small boy repeated to me from the works of one of our great poets. "The poem," said the boy, "was about a man who never saw things as they really were," and to illustrate the truth of this he quoted the words :

*A primrose by the river's brim,  
It was a daffodil to him.*

Though I had a vague feeling at the moment that the child had muddled things up somehow, the couplet exactly expresses the mental attitude of such men as Lord Haldane towards the real foundations of English education.

And if you want to understand the spirit of German education, read Albert Smith's admirable book, "The Soul of Germany."

## CONCLUSION

IF those who have joined in this attack want all these reforms, and they really are the good things which I am certain the reformers honestly believe they are, there is one most excellent way of getting them, and I have pointed this out to "reformers" over and over again, though when you suggest it they hate you worse than ever.

There are one or two excellent Public Schools which, through no fault of their own, have fallen upon evil times and are not at this moment very prosperous. Let the reformers go to the authorities who manage one of these schools; let them get out their scheme; let them call it by some attractive name—"The Jellicoe Scheme" or something of the kind. Let them offer in return for the Public School\* authorities adopting their scheme all this tremendous weight of honest reform instinct which they have collected. If this plan were judiciously advertised the boys would come in shoals. Then when these boys

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(as soon as it came to their going forth into the world) "knocked the stuffing," educationally speaking, out of the Eton boys, as, of course, they would, Eton would have to wheel into line. Nothing could be better than this. Mr. Elwes (to show that he had the courage of his opinions) would send that grandson of his whom we hear so much about in his speech to this school, and that would be certain to give the scheme a really good send-off ; a very large sum of money would be required for an absolutely up-to-date science plant. But Mr. Samuel could write a cheque for that as easily as I can tip the waiter his twopence as I leave my little restaurant in Soho.

"Ah, but we don't want to do that," say the reformers. "We want to reform our dear old school because we do love it so much."

I don't think the members of this "reform" club are the men for the work, and I will conclude my remarks by explaining quite briefly why I hold this opinion.

Science tells us that as the earth "evolves" (I am not sure whether that is the right expression) we pass through certain stages. There is the preglacial period—followed, I imagine, by the glacial period. Though there, if you presume, science may tell you to mind your own business,

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and it is quite possible that the very latest scientist has a preglacial period and then goes straight on to the liqueurs ; but be that as it may, you come in time to what is known as the industrial period.

We are through that now, and are well forward in the great " are-grinding " period.

In diplomacy, whenever flutterings in the dove-cot occur, there is an ancient maxim, *cherchez la femme*, and whenever in education these sudden spasms of noble endeavour in the cause of right rend the British nation as it were in twain; there is another maxim to bear in mind, *cherchez la hachette*.

What really great men the " reformers " would be if Eton were " reformed " through their endeavours, but they will fail to accomplish this because they are asking (in their hopes to be thus handed down to posterity) far too much for their money ; they should have endeavoured to offer in return for the reward they claim a little knowledge of the subject.

### NOTE A

During the time that this little book was being printed, I came across the paper in the *Fortnightly Review* in which Mr. Wells attacks Mr.

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Livingstone's book, "A Defence of Classical Education," and nothing could prove more conclusively than Mr. Wells's attack how unanswerable are the arguments that I have here been putting forward, because Mr. Wells, although he persistently accuses Mr. Livingstone of not facing the real points at issue, takes very good care not to face them for a single moment himself.

"The attack upon the classical education," says Mr. Wells, "is merely an attack upon its exclusive 'predominance,'" and he implies that this "exclusive predominance" is a fact, though he knows perfectly well that to talk of the "exclusive predominance" of the classics in our English higher education is just as ridiculous nonsense as to talk of the "exclusive predominance" of association football at our Public Schools.

Every Public School has its modern side or army class (which is another name for the same thing), and I have pointed out over and over again that, for the last twenty years at least, a boy at a Public School need no more learn Greek than he need learn dancing, and as to Latin, the amount of that done on modern sides is entirely subordinated to modern subjects (French, mathematics, and so on) and might quite easily be further reduced.

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But that one or two Public Schools and one or two Universities pay special attention to the classics is no more a crime on their part than that other Public Schools and other Universities should give prominence to mathematics and science; that, indeed, which foreign experts in education who have studied our methods in England urge us above all to retain, is this freedom from bureaucratic uniformity, a freedom through which every student after he has reached a certain point is so equipped that he is at liberty to choose what branches of knowledge he shall pursue. But the question so often debated (which is only a minor one) is, to what extent are you to promote uniformity up to that point? Thus Oxford, I believe, retains a compulsory elementary paper in Greek for those who are going to give up Greek as soon as they can, but it also retains a compulsory paper in elementary mathematics for those who are going to give up mathematics as soon as they can. "Nobody," says Mr. Wells, "denies the value of a classical education." Very well—then the real point at issue is this, that up to a certain stage you must maintain the principle of continuity, and that just as the classical boy should up to a certain point learn some mathematics, so should the



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science boy or the mathematical boy, up to a certain point, learn some classics.

The report of the Moseley Commission upon American education brought out very clearly the difficulties into which a country plunges itself if it abandons this principle of having certain fixed subjects as compulsory, in higher education till students have reached a certain point.

For, after all, examinations may or may not be good things, but they are a part of the educational scheme in every country, and will no doubt continue to be so; if, therefore, you abandon this principle of certain set subjects, then any one of the million branches of specialized knowledge has an equal claim to be hall-marked by the examination test, and each University must, therefore, provide a million specialist examiners. So that it is not a question of the retention of Greek at all, but of the retention of *anything*.

The Public School head masters who lately joined with such men as Mr. Wells in striking at Oxford by advising the abolition of Greek, knew well enough that this was the *real* point at issue, but they wanted to be on the popular side, and so played to the gallery.

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Nobody ought to complain of Mr. Wells for being on the popular side, because that is his bread and butter, but this does not, therefore, help his arguments. If you read Mr. Livingstone's book through I do not think you will find a single sneer against scientific attainments, but Mr. Wells, in order to prove his case, is driven to sneer at the classical man as "never looking at a tripod in a chemical laboratory without rolling the eyes and murmuring 'Dephi.' " But when Mr. Wells sneers at the classics in this way, he is sneering not at Mr. Livingstone so much as at the late Lord Cromer and Lord Bryce and the late Lord Redesdale, and we are, therefore, driven to ask ourselves the question, Which man knows most of the world, Lord Cromer or Mr. Wells ?

Mr. Wells also knows perfectly well that what Mr. Livingstone said with regard to the place classics held in German education was simply this : that whereas for generations before the war Germany has been always held up as the most up-to-date and thorough country in the world, with regard to her schemes of education, Germany has all the while retained the classics to a greater extent than we have, and for Mr. Wells (p. 568) to snap out the puerile schoolboy

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retort that since Germany has now morally disgraced herself this proves the classics are no good—this cheap score is accomplished by descending just about as low in argument as you possibly can, because Mr. Wells knows perfectly well that the great argument brought against the classics in this country for the last forty years has always been founded on the thesis that we retain them because our methods are antiquated as compared with those of such countries as Germany; and that this argument collapses before the plain fact that Germany has all the while been more classical in her higher education than we have.

When Mr. Wells brings forward his great thesis that you can get just as much good from the classics by reading the "Cribs" as by learning the languages, the only answer again is to refer him to Lord Bryce and the late Lord Redesdale and the late Lord Cromer, and the point I would again insist upon is, that it is *not* schoolmasters and "dons" who decide these questions, but men such as Lord Cromer, who really *are* at the top. Mr. Wells might tell Sir John Jellicoe that you can make a young man into just as good a sailor without ever sending him to sea, but the answer is, Does such a man as Mr. Wells, i.e. a

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man who has spent his life in writing novels and tracts on socialism, know as much about education as those who (like Lord Cromer) are in the widest sense responsible for the efficiency of the actual product of any national education scheme that may be in use ?

When Mr. Wells says that the attack upon the classics is justly due to the fact that " preference is given to them in the higher division Civil Service Examinations " (p. 567), if it be the fact that such a preference is given, this has nothing to do with schoolmasters or with the educational authorities at all, but the responsibility lies with the Government itself, and if such men as Mr. Lloyd George do allow any such preference to be retained, it is possibly because they have had opportunities of conversing with such men as the late Lord Cromer, as well as with such men as Mr. Wells, and of thus arriving at an independent conclusion as to which type of man is the best to follow.

The strength of the attack upon the classics, according to Mr. Wells, lies in the fact that (for one thing) they produce " a narrow and stereotyped class of public servant, frequently very ignorant beyond his special range." To me this is quite delightful, because it implies that the

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scientific man is *not* "ignorant beyond his special range," whereas now that the branches of knowledge have been multiplied a millionfold, and that multiplication increases daily by leaps and bounds, we must all of us of necessity become more and more "ignorant beyond our special range" as time goes on.

May I conclude with one humble suggestion. It may be that we do now get "a narrow and stereotyped class of public servant" in the higher branches of our Civil Service, but may this not be due to the fact that we pick this man in his youth *simply and solely on the result of a written examination*?

I believe that many of those whose lives are concerned with education will agree that such a plan could be modified. If we had an examination up to a good sound standard, *but first picked the men who were to go in for it by means of an interview* (the plan now followed for the Navy), we should then by the help of past records in each individual case secure men who not only had the requisite ability (which would be tested by the examination), but who contained amongst their number a far larger percentage of those who gave promise of being men of action. Above all, we should get rid of the type of man whom

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you can “spot” in an interview (combined with a “*fact*” account of his doings up to date) in two minutes, i.e. the man who can sweep the board in any sort of examination, classical or scientific, but who has kept out of the stream of life (so to speak) during his boyhood, and has concentrated his whole existence upon marks and prizes and medals.

As I have before implied, the schoolmaster is not the man to settle what ought to be done in education (though he should be consulted), but he has (or ought to have) his nose too close to the grindstone to be able to formulate broad general schemes, and I have indicated the type of man whom it is wise to follow. But on this particular point, viz. the question of the boy who is an “infant-examination-prodigy,” may I, as a despised schoolmaster, be allowed to speak? This boy is ruined by his parents in many cases from the very start; from the moment he is born they settle to “run” him for a scholarship; he is bred up in the belief that this is the only thing worth struggling for, and they (the parents) resent it, if you (the schoolmaster) put other and higher aims before him. If the boy is successful, he goes through his school life *in* the Public School but not *of* it; he then goes to the Univer-

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sity, where he becomes still more isolated, and if he gets, as he often does, into the public services, he is a handicap all the way through to real efficiency; he develops a passion for "red tape," and detests independence in his subordinates. These men get into the Civil Service (as it is now chosen) in sufficient numbers to clog the wheels of the machine, and having little or no initiative themselves they know by instinct that their own progress up the ladder will depend upon how far they can "squash" initiative in others. Nobody can blame them exactly, because it is a question of self-preservation. But I think the war has opened the eyes of the whole nation to the terrible danger of such men as these getting into a position in which they can suddenly "turn off the water at the main," and there seems to be no reason whatever why this danger should not be, to a certain extent, averted in the future in the manner I suggest. The scheme has worked very well with the Navy, and the danger of favouritism and jobbery has certainly been avoided. I believe this suggestion which I here put forward has been made before, during this war, by some of the very best educational authorities in the kingdom. It would certainly be far more democratic than the

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present scheme, as it would throw the Civil Services open (in a far greater degree) to men who cannot afford to pay for the education necessary for passing these terrific examinations.





· “ *The Times* ” Review of  
“ *Public Schools and Public Opinion* ” ·

## THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

THIS LITTLE BOOK of 136 pages deserves to be read by everybody who takes an interest in our Public School education. We desire to emphasize this fact, because Mr. Pellatt, from motives easily understood, does not advertise his qualification to speak on his title-page; and in the stream of educational polemics a small book which is not written by a professor may very easily be overlooked. But the book has, to begin with, the salt of liveliness, and is one which at every turn stimulates thought, and makes the reader wish to discuss it with his next-door neighbour. Some books have this power of spreading infection. Therefore we shall be disappointed if this book is not very widely read.

If it is widely read, it ought to do valuable service as an antidote to a great deal of the shallow and pretentious theorizing about education which is nowadays so much in vogue. The most pretentious theorists, who have achieved success, often well merited, in some particular branch of knowledge, and imagine that this is the same thing as education, will naturally not suppose that they have anything to learn from a mere schoolmaster; nor, perhaps, will irresponsible writers who like to fulminate, from under the ægis of some distinguished man of science, against the educational system which has armed them with their facile thunderbolts. But the large class of parents, to whom the book is primarily addressed, may obtain from it not only much encouragement amidst the fashionable denunciations of our Public Schools, but much food for thought and self-examination; and the same may be said of schoolmasters. For Mr. Pellatt is no

\* PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC OPINION: An apology for certain methods in English Higher Education. By T. Pellatt (Longmans, 2s. 6d. net).

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indiscriminate panegyrist of our Public Schools. On the contrary, he is a keen critic. Himself once an eminent Oxford athlete he knows the pleasure of games, and realizes their value in eliminating from our schools "such types as Flashman in 'Tom Brown' or Thackeray's Duval and Bullock"; but he holds that "it cannot be too incessantly driven into the heads of all boys, big and little, that games are the handmaid of lessons—a means of making you fit and fresh for work, and a means where the game itself is only of secondary importance compared with the spirit in which it is played"; and he proceeds: "Boys will generally play games in the right spirit if those who control them show in their own methods and conduct what that spirit is. But as our games at school and elsewhere grow year by year more professional and gladiatorial, the tendency is not to think of the great bulk of average players at all. 'To him that hath shall be given' is the prevailing principle, and it is now pitilessly carried out in almost all schools to its logical conclusion." Again, he says, "The effect of the scholarship system upon the general teaching of both public and preparatory schools is extremely bad." He does not by any means see everything *couleur de rose*.

But the main objects of Mr. Pellatt's attack (for he evidently holds the opinion that the best form of defence is counter-attack) are the so-called utilitarian view of education and the desire to adopt blindly any panacea which claims to be scientific or to be of German origin. He has little difficulty in showing, what is well known to people who have thought about these matters and who study facts as well as theories, that the utilitarian view is quite unpractical, that "to talk of scientific methods in training the intellect is merely to talk in metaphor," and that the cry for the German system is accompanied by ignorance of German education and German expert opinion. The chief merit of the book lies in the telling way in which these facts are thrust home. Here is an instance:

"At the present moment it is the fashion to talk as if the whole salvation of education depended on the abolition of Greek, as if Greek were a sort of decayed tooth in Athene's head, and the goddess that presides over knowledge could have no peace until it were extracted. But there is nothing actually pernicious in the study of the language, and the mere expunging of it from our programme is not in itself likely to turn dull boys into clever ones. Such ideas as these always bring a smile to the faces of foreigners. The Germans have made no material alteration for the last 40 years in the amount of time allotted to Greek in their gymnasia, nor are they likely to make any. They do not hold the subject as of the same importance as Latin, but they still believe that what Johnson said holds true, 'Greek is like lace; we must get as much of it as we can.'"

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Again :

" To train a man to teach Board school boys because he intends to be a Public School master is like apprenticing a youth to a stone-mason and then setting him to work in a clay-pit. There is a *non sequitur* about it before which the reason must simply collapse. Rational argument finds no place in dealing with such ideas.

And a little further on :

" It would, no doubt, be a good thing if teachers could be trained before they went to Public Schools, just as it would be a good thing if soldiers could fight a few real battles as a preliminary to starting on a campaign ; and if somebody could devise the means of doing either of these things he would be doing the country a great service.

" ' Education is *not* the acquisition of information.'—Fouillée. I keep a list of the various subjects suggested to me from time to time by parents and others for little boys of 11 and 12. At present it amounts to 131. All of these are sensible enough in their way, and a brief might be held for any one of them."

These extracts give a slight idea of the liveliness of Mr. Pellatt's style. It scintillates with the activity of radium, and in a long treatise would tire the reader out with its incessant flashes. Occasionally, too, his exuberance leads Mr. Pellatt into exaggeration of phrase, his wealth of metaphor into undue repetition. But it is useless to pick small holes in a book which does not pretend to be primarily a work of art. The point to emphasize is that here we have a writer whose treatment of the subjects, while in no way neglectful of theory, is based upon the two complementary foundations of experience and aptitude for dealing with boys. More than half the lectures and articles and contributions to Blue-books on education are vitiated from the start by the natural incapacity of the writers to get into touch with human nature. All that they say sounds quite complete and logical so long as you shut your eyes to the human element. But in every page of this book you feel that you are listening to a real man, who looks upon men and boys with a keen and independent eye.

Another merit of Mr. Pellatt's book of especial importance at the present day is the keen intellectual interest which underlies its rollicking tone of irony and expostulation. The greatest obstacle to educational success is the fallacy, so widely believed, that there is a necessary opposition between moral and intellectual efficiency. Incidentally throughout the book, but especially in the admirable first chapter, " Fathers and Sons," Mr. Pellatt riddles the fallacy with pointed ridicule and serious argument. His remarks on " Tom Brown's Schooldays " in this connexion

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are an excellent piece of criticism, all the more so because he thoroughly appreciates that classic. While nobody would assert in so many words that moral and intellectual efficiency are incompatible, the assumption is tacitly made by many of the critics of our Public School system. In "Tom Brown" the assumption is made in favour of morals at the expense of intellect; and this is the attitude no doubt of the great bulk of those parents who try to do their duty and of too many schoolmasters. Thus there is some excuse for the swing of the pendulum to the other extreme. There is a small, but violent, class of critics who simply discount the training of character in education; who judge our schools by tests of intellectual standard, or even only of the amount of information they manage to crowd into their curriculum; and to whom any one who betrays any sympathy with ordinary boyhood is an incurable optimist, a Philistine, impervious to intellectual interests, or a mere *aurae popularis captator*. It is of the utmost importance that such a view should not be allowed to dominate our educational reforms, and, therefore, that schoolmasters who can show themselves, as very many could, to be living proofs of the contrary should not leave the discussion of educational questions to the various types of faddist who fill the air with conflicting and impracticable proposals. The faddist has his use, so long as we do not adopt his fad. The best teachers, whether at schools or at Universities, are, as a rule, so fully occupied that they would insensibly drift into routine were it not for the stings of these gadflies; and drifting into routine, they would cease to be the best teachers. But while the much-abused race of schoolmasters contains, as experience tells us that it does, a large proportion of men who, in their various ways, possess the same combination of sound sense, sympathy, intellectual keenness, and manliness of character which this little book of Mr. Pellatt's displays, we shall hope that higher education will continue to improve upon self-chosen lines, and will not be revolutionized in panic.

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